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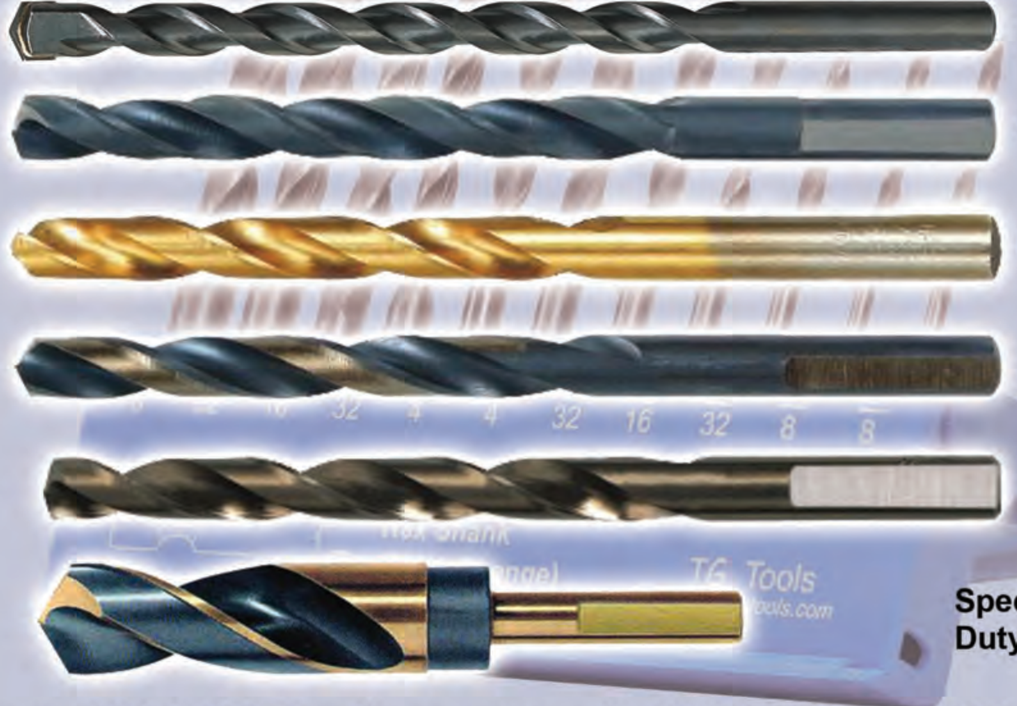

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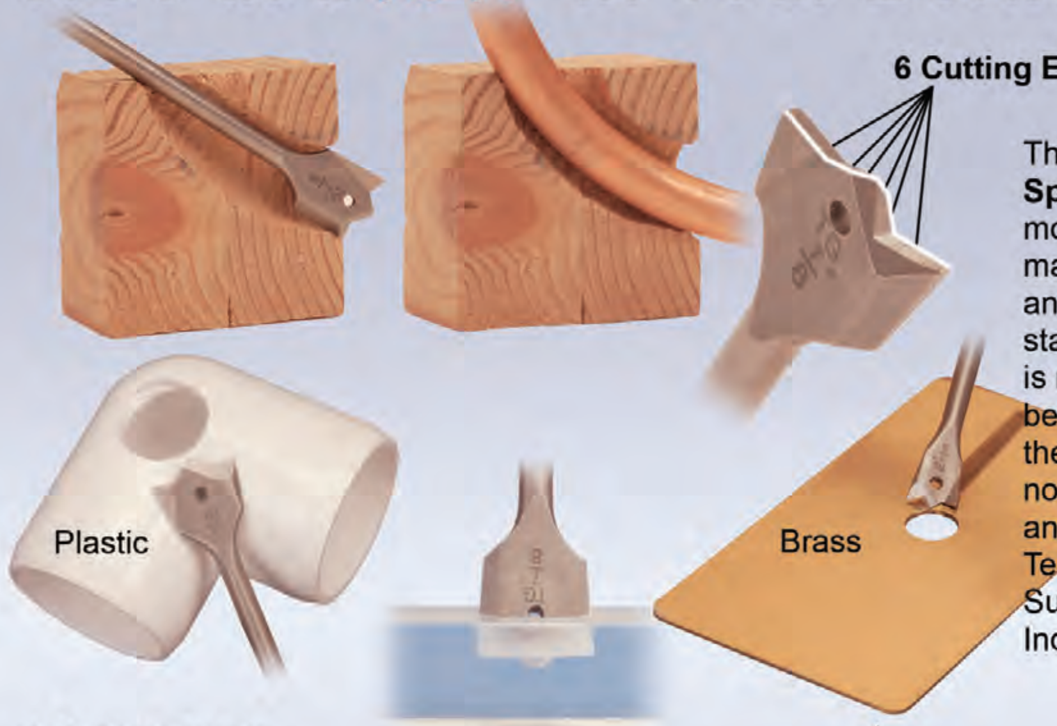

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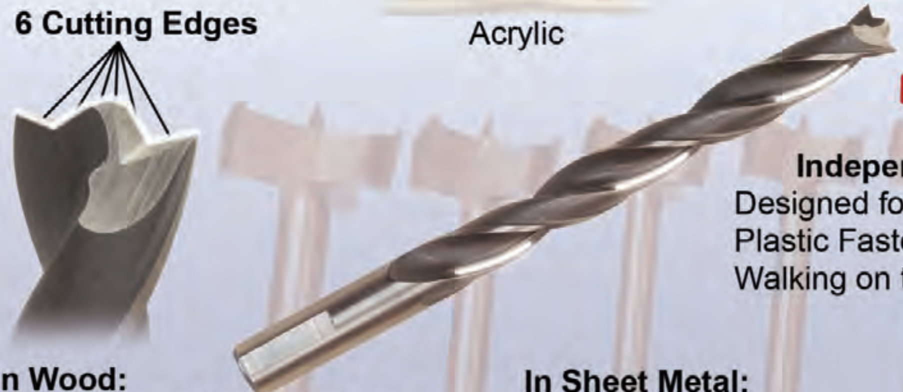

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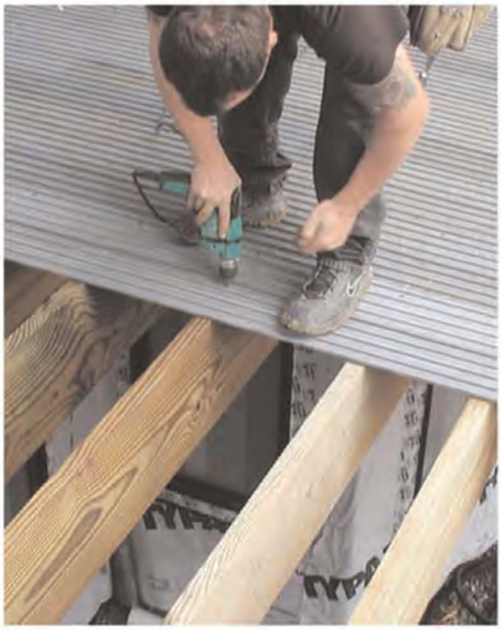

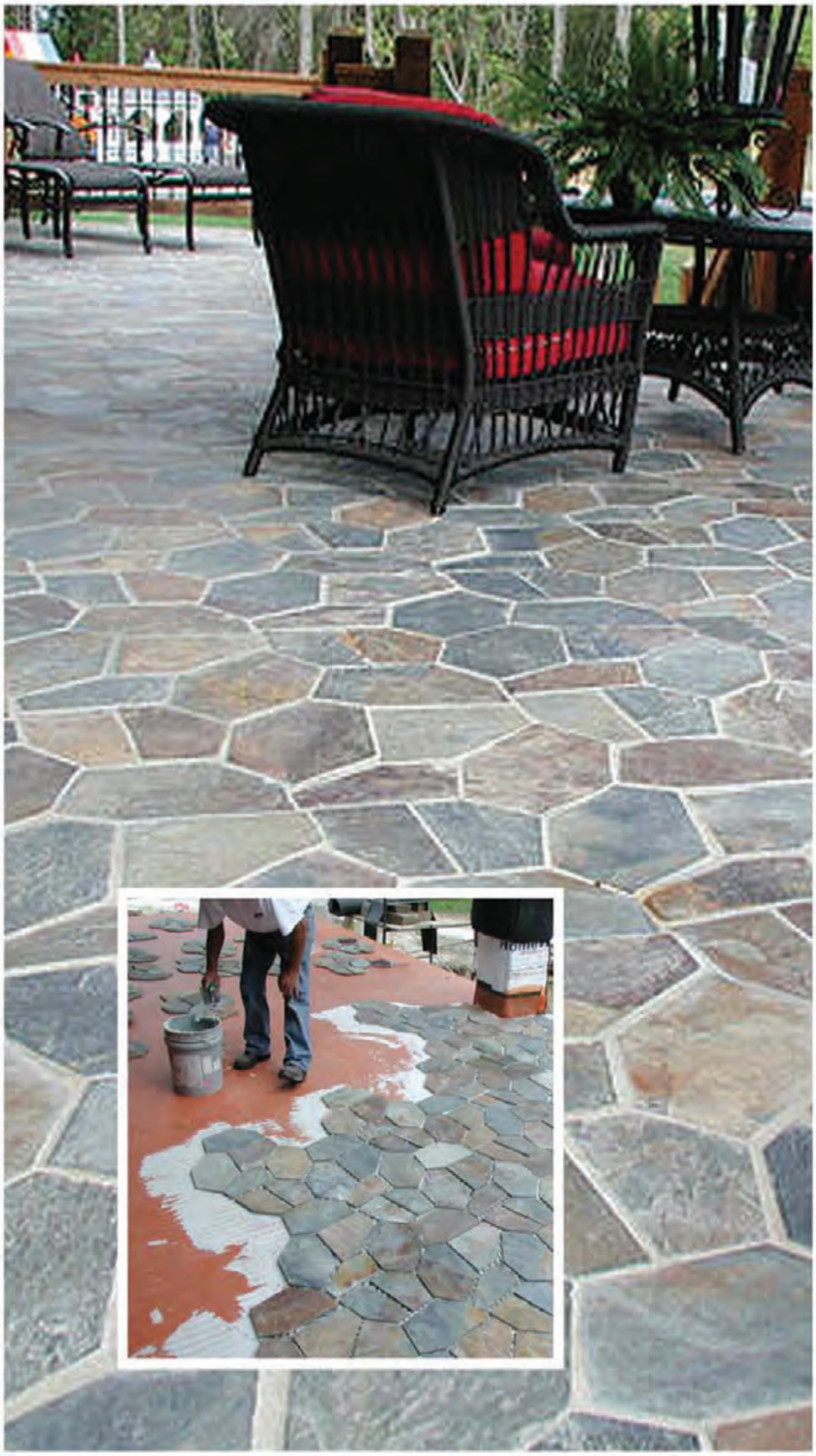

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LETTER

From The Editor-In-Chief

More than 320 students recently paid about $260 to visit our hometown of Birmingham, Alabama, sleep on a high school floor and perform construction work for free on low-income houses. The group is called World Changers, and the Birmingham group is among 23,000 teenage volunteers improving the living conditions of people across the United States and Canada. Since 1990, over 260,000 World Changers students have renovated more than 19,500 homes in more than 900 communities.

I stopped by one of the Birmingham work sites to see what all the fuss was about. I found a couple dozen kids outfitted with paint cans, brushes, hammers and roofing nails. They were giving homeowner Linda Hall's exterior façade a much-needed facelift, completely repainting the exterior and installing new roof shingles in the sticky heat of the Alabama summer. Roofing is tough work, and hot weather makes it particularly grueling, but the students were all smiles and jokes. The World Changers were doing an excellent job of sprucing up the house, and having a great time doing it, occasionally even breaking into song. And Linda Hall was grinning from ear to ear, bragging on the crew of volunteers who she described as a "blessing from God."

As Jonathan Wilson, Coordinator for World Changers explains, "World Changers is a win-win for communities and participants. For a community, these volunteers help stretch their housing rehabilitation dollars. For the volunteers, a World Changers project provides a place of service. They don't have to wait until they get to college, get married, get a full-time job, etc. They can help make a difference now."

I was impressed. In the middle of these uncertain economic times, these students were dipping into their own pockets to help improve the homes of others. Now, that's change you can believe in.

For more information, visit www.worldchangers.net. Also, visit www.extremehowto.com to check out a few photos I shot at the Birmingham work site.

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Q: *The basement of our home has rough block walls with some very sloppy mortar joints. I'd like to paint the wall, but how should I clean up the joints first?*

A: Most professionals would probably use a 2-pound masonry hammer and cold chisel to chip off any excess mortar protruding from the joints. Then wash and rinse the entire block wall to get the best surface adhesion from the masonry paint. Use a trowel to fill any shallow spots or holes with mortar. Once it has dried, use a stiff brush to apply a primer coat of masonry-surfacer paint to the patched areas of the wall. Finally, paint the wall using a roller with a long-napped sleeve to work the surfacer into the face of the block.

Q: *Why does my hot water heater run cold so quickly?*

A: If you're running out of hot water too quickly, there may be several factors contributing to the problem. Make sure no faucets or other appliances have recently been used to deplete the hot water supply. Check the output volume of the shower head. Most new shower heads spray about 2-1/2 gallons per minute, but some older models put out nearly 5 gallons per minute, which runs through the hot water at a faster rate. Another possibility is that the dip tube on the cold water inlet is damaged, causing water at the bottom half of the tank to not be used. The tank's heating elements may be another factor. Electric water heaters usually have two elements that work in sequence, one at the top and one at the bottom of the tank. Both need to be working to properly heat the water. Sometimes pressing the Reset button will restart both elements. Replace the element if necessary.

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*Questions About Home Building, Remodeling? Have Your Own How-To Tip? Visit our website at **www.extremehowto.com** and click on Home Repair Forum.*

Q: *My air-conditioning unit is sitting outside the house right where I want to build a deck. Can I build over the AC unit, or should I move it?*

A: Definitely have it moved. Air-conditioning units require a great deal of "breathing room" or space to exchange air. Building a deck or any other structure over it will choke off the air supply, greatly impacting your air-conditioning performance and possibly damaging the system. Most manufacturers specify at least 60 inches of uninterrupted clearance above the condensers. Also, the unit blows out hot air, which is not very comfortable when it's wafting upward from beneath the deck on a hot, summer day. Plus, by moving the unit you or a service technician will have unobstructed access to address any maintenance issues in the future.

……

Q: *Is CPVC as good as copper for plumbing projects?*

A: For most residential applications, CPVC is just as good as copper provided the plumbing lines are not used underground or beneath concrete, not exposed to freezing temperatures, and as long as CPVC meets local plumbing codes. In fact, for situations such as lake homes or cabins, water can actually stand long enough to corrode copper pipes, so CPVC may be a better choice. **EHT**

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Level-headed

Advances in design make today's levels easier to use than ever before.

By Matt Weber

When it comes to writing a tool column on levels, it's nice to have something new to talk about. Any experienced DIY'er is well versed in the basics of leveling tools, and how crucial they are for everything from rough house framing to hanging a family portrait. Today's levels do everything the traditional tools do, and more, thanks to innovative advances in design and technology.

PRECISION BALL LEVEL

One of the more unique leveling tools to hit store shelves in recent years is the new Precision Ball Level from C.H. Hanson. Based on aviation technology, the level's inventor was inspired by a video flight simulator that used a ball-compass to illustrate wing position. Much easier to read than a standard bubble vial, the large two-toned, 2-inch aviation ball at the center of the tool rotates 360 degrees and indicates level at first glance.

Plus, the high visibility of the Precision Ball Level provides additional advantages, such as providing precise markings on the tool to take accurate measurements of angle or pitch. Additionally, the casing of the ball features a cross-hair sightline at a perfect 90 degrees. With the cross-hair feature, you can turn the level on its back and check for level in two directions at once. By aligning the small air bubble in the top of the ball at dead center of the crosshairs, this single tool can check level in multiple planes, which comes in handy for jobs such as shimming a pool table perfectly level. The Precision Ball Level is built with rigid aircraft aluminum and protected at each end with shock-resistant end caps. Learn more at www.chhanson.com.

The Precision Ball Level from C.H. Hanson utilizes aviation technology to easily determine level, angle or pitch.

WOOD MAGNET

Until someone invents some sort of Extra Hand, we'll have to rely on the two we've got, so it's nice when a new tool comes along that frees up one of those crucial appendages to more easily complete a project. The Wood Magnet from Swanson Tools is a lightweight plastic tool that compress-fits over the edge of

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Empire's new e100 version is a 48-inch level that offers additional features, including a digital readout and a laser centerline that projects from the end of the level. The digital component reads slope, pitch and inch/foot in virtually any light, even when upside-down. It also holds its digital memory for later reference, and includes an audio button to hear a beep within one degree of level or plumb. Both the 48-inch Empire levels are constructed of aircraft aluminum and feature shock-absorbing end caps. On Amazon.com, the e70 was selling for just under $50 while a new e100 was going for less than $120. Learn more at www.empirelevel.com.

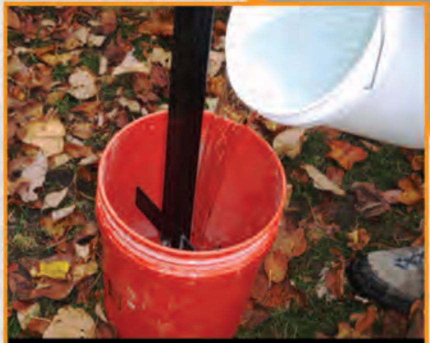
KAPRO 985D DIGIMAN

Kapro's new 985D Digiman strikes a balance between a traditional level and a full-featured digital level. It features a tough frame and shockproof end caps to protect it from the rigors of the jobsite. It also includes Kapro's patented Plumb Site Dual-View vial, which makes leveling easier because you

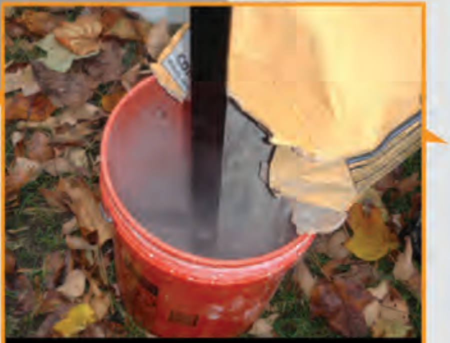
ELECTRONIC WATER LEVEL

For big jobs it helps to have a big level. The Electronic Water Level from Digital Leveling Systems is designed for home inspections, foundation repair, and general construction such as building masonry foundations. With 100 feet of tubing, the Electronic Water Level reads in inches and tenths of an inch, and will typically level to within 0.2 inch. A retractable reel is included for easy storage. During heavy construction, the Electronic Water Level provides a way to keep large building components level, such as beams being loaded by a crane. To see a pictorial of the Electronic Water Level in action, visit the Product News section of www.extremehowto.com.

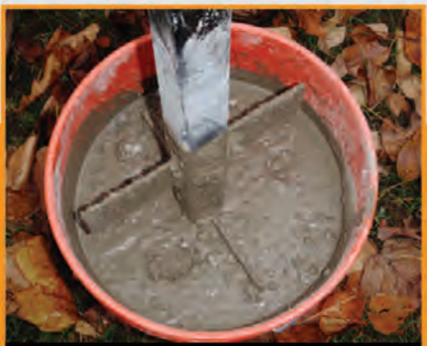
mortrex
concrete mixing tool



1. Simply pour the water to the top of the lower mixing paddle.

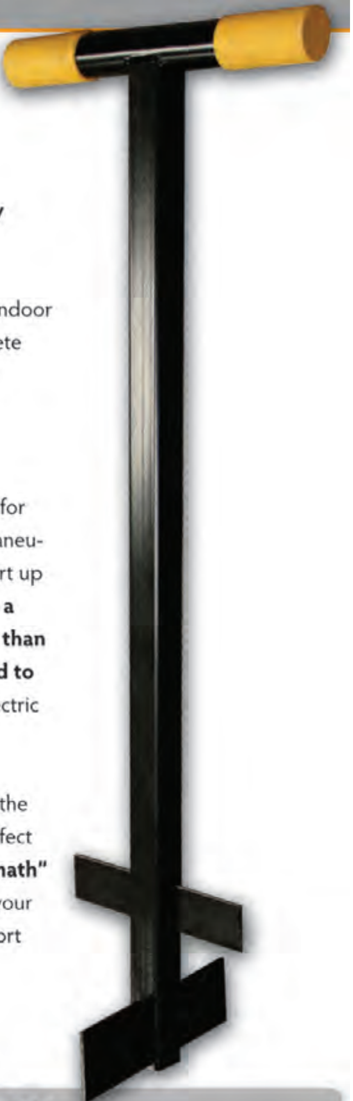


2. Now add 2/3rds of a 60 lb. bag of concrete.



3. Stir and agitate. Then add final 1/3 of concrete. Stir and agitate.

CONCRETE MIXING, EASY AS 1, 2, 3!



The Mortrex Concrete Mixer is designed to go any where you need to go.

It is the perfect portable tool for mixing concrete for indoor and outdoor projects. Originally created to mix concrete fast and precisely for fence posts, the Mortrex mixing tool has proven to be useful in a multitude of other applications as well.

The Mortrex Concrete Mixing Tool replaces the need for big messy wheelbarrows which are cumbersome to maneuver across rough terrain and are impossible to transport up and down stairs. **The Mortrex tool, when used with a 5 gallon bucket, allows you to mix concrete in less than a half minute and easily carry it to where you need to go.** No matter where you take it, you will not need electric or batteries to power it.

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can read the level not only from the side of the tool as usual, but also from the front or "edge" of the tool. This means it's easier to read certain measurements without straining your neck for an accurate reading.

The digital module of the 985D includes a backlit LCD that automatically inverts the readout when using the level upside-down. The "mode" function displays the digital readout in degrees, percentages or pitch. An audible buzzer notifies when you're at level or plumb. Additional features include rare-earth magnets, and a memory feature that recalls up to nine measurements. Kapro's 985D is available in 10-, 24- and 48-inch levels. Learn more at www.kapro.com.

What in the world is Eco Tape?
ecotape
Duct Tape doesn't just grow on trees, you know.
ecotape

Eco Tape is an environmentally responsible alternative to your conventional duct tape. **Eco Tape** uses more renewable, sustainable, and post consumer materials than any other duct tape on the market. Here at Patriot Tapes we understand we are not a clean industry, however through innovation and our dedication to a cleaner environment we have developed an alternative duct tape that displays the characteristics shared by other duct tapes on the market.

Duct tape is made up of three main ingredients plastic film, cloth and adhesive. It is all petroleum based, even the cloth is polyester. We know how harmful petroleum is to our environment so we decided to clean up our act. **Eco Tapes** components are made a little different but with the same intention of giving our consumer a tool to make those essential repairs, while helping the environment, without spending a lot of money to make a difference.

Our components consist of:

- **100%** recycled core **35%** being post consumer recycled materials such as old newspapers, magazines, and books.
- Cloth made from **37.1%** post consumer recycled polyester such as plastic bottles.
- The roll labels are made from wild harvest grasses and banana peels ensuring no trees were cut down or harmed in the manufacturing of our product.
- Adhesive is made from **58%** sunflower oil reducing the amount of petroleum used in the process and using a renewable source for our base components.
- We have even taken this a step further by donating **5%** of the proceeds to our Plant a Tree program to eliminate our Company's carbon footprint.

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If you would like to find out more about our product or just interested in planting a tree to reduce your own carbon footprint visit our website at www.Ducttapetree.com and see how you can help the environment.

www.DuctTapeTree.com

SWANSON SAVAGE LEVELS

Perfect for contractors and electrical and plumbing professionals, Swanson's new line of precision-machined, solid-billet aluminum torpedo levels, the 9-inch Savage and 6-inch Lil' Savage, are equipped with several timesaving features in one pocket-sized, lightweight tool. The four-vial design features Swanson's exclusive Brightview milled vial ports that capture and reflect light for increased readability and accurate measurement of level, 30, 45 and 90 degrees. Each Savage level includes top-read viewing windows for an easy, straightforward view of the 0- and 30-degree vials. Laser-engraved SAE and metric rules are prominently indicated on both levels. Additionally, rare-earth, neodymium magnets have also been integrated into the levels'

design for maximum holding power. The Savage and Lil' Savage levels retail at under $30.00 and offer an exclusive, extra-wide V-grooved edge that accepts a 10-inch diameter pipe. The Lil' Savage includes the exclusive TRI-LOC "Anti-Dog" attachment, which offers three points of contact that lock the level onto the pipe, eliminating any level movement and accommodating offset bends in the piping. Learn more at www.swansontoolco.com.

THE ROOFING PROTRACTOR

The Roofing Protractor is primarily a layout tool more than a dedicated level. It has a bubble vial to find level, but this crazy-looking contraption is specifically intended for roof layout work. Using a pitch/angle finder combined with locking knobs and a sliding square, the Roofing Protractor is a multipurpose tool designed to find roof pitch and help mark rafter cuts, including plumb cut, angles for jack rafters, and even the bird's mouth. The tool features an additional small protractor to mark seats for hip and valley rafters.

Roof building can take a lot of measuring and calculation, and with a little practice, the Roofing Protractor can certainly help make sense out of this complex task. However, the tool is very large, will not lay flat and is made almost completely of plastic. As such, it makes it difficult to store, and I fear the plastic parts wouldn't withstand the bangs and bruises of a typical jobsite. To that end, I think the Roofing Protractor would simplify a roofing job for a determined DIY'er tackling such a project, but professionals might want to wait for a sturdier metal version, which Australian inventor Derek Pater currently has in development. Learn more at www.realinventions.com.au. **EHT**

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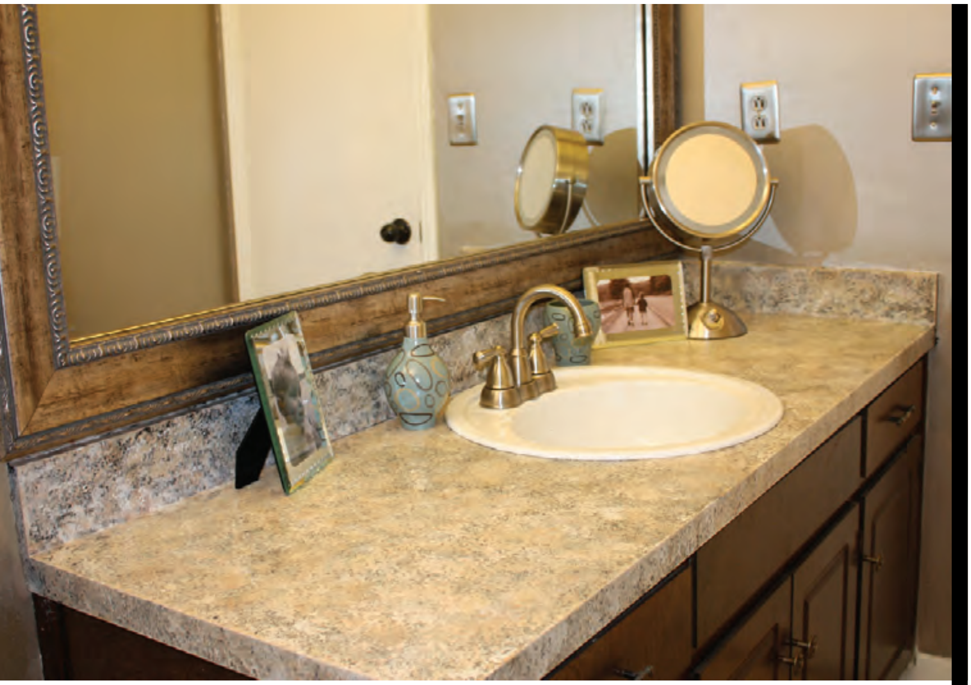


By Matt Weber

The *EHT* staff came across an interesting paint system at the 2009 National Hardware Show that offered a way to decorate an existing countertop surface to look like granite. The product is called Gianni and it includes a kit that covers approximately 35 square feet of countertop—that's roughly 16 running feet of standard 24-inch wide countertops. The idea is to use a combination of black primer and mineral paints of various color tones to mimic the natural appearance of granite. It provides a simple and inexpensive way to redecorate an old Formica, laminate, Corian or wood countertop without having to cut and install new sheet laminate or invest in more costly new materials and/or labor.

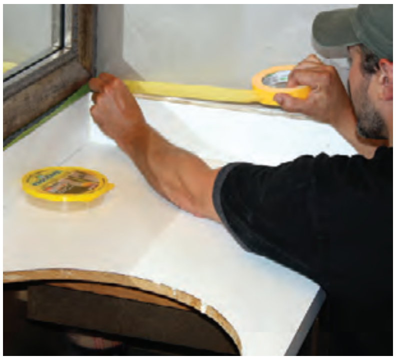
The Gianni kit is available in two styles: Sicilian Sand and Bombay Black. To spruce up the old, white laminate countertop shown in this article, we used the Sicilian Sand style, which provides a rich combination of soft, neutral stone tones. Here's how the project went …

CLEAN & PREP

As with any painting project, the first step is to clean and prep the surface to be painted. Remove any obstructions from the countertop surface—I even pulled the sink. Use a quality household degreaser to scrub away dirt, grease and debris, and fill any deep cracks or nicks with wood patch or laminate repair filler. Allow the filler to dry and then sand flush with the countertop surface. Cut away any loose caulk from the sink or backsplash.

As with any painting project, the first step is to thoroughly clean the work surface.

Next, mask off the countertop and backsplash with a quality painter's tape. The bathroom walls had previously been painted with a special two-part reflective paint, which was expensive, difficult to use, and damages easily from painter's tape. (I won't be using that type of paint again). Still, after all the hassle of applying it to the wall, I didn't want to damage the finish, so I used a prototype of Frog Tape's new self-sealing masking tape specially formulated for delicate surfaces (www.frogtape.com).



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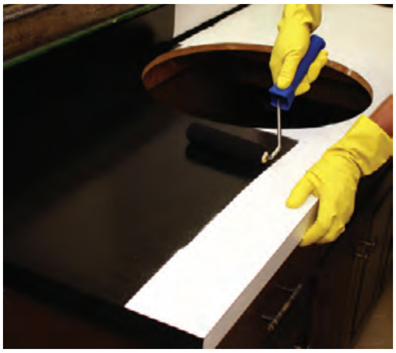
I nabbed a sample at the Hardware Show and, prototype or not, the stuff worked like a charm.

PRIMER COAT

The Gianni paint system comes in a five-phase kit, including: IronCore primer; three different shades of mineral paint to be applied successively; and a glossy topcoat.

Pour a small amount of the IronCore primer labeled "Step 1" into a paint tray. Use a 2-inch foam brush to cut-in the primer around the corners and edges of the countertop and backsplash. Use narrow brush strokes to minimize marks. The Gianni kit includes two paint trays, the foam brush and a roller.

Next, use the roller to apply the primer over the surface of the countertop. Work in 3-foot sections, rolling a single direction with overlapping strokes. After completing each 3-foot section, roll back over the primer with long, straight rows to reduce air bubbles. Repeat this process in 3-foot sections across the rest of the countertop. Make sure to roll out any paint runs before they dry. When finished, thoroughly



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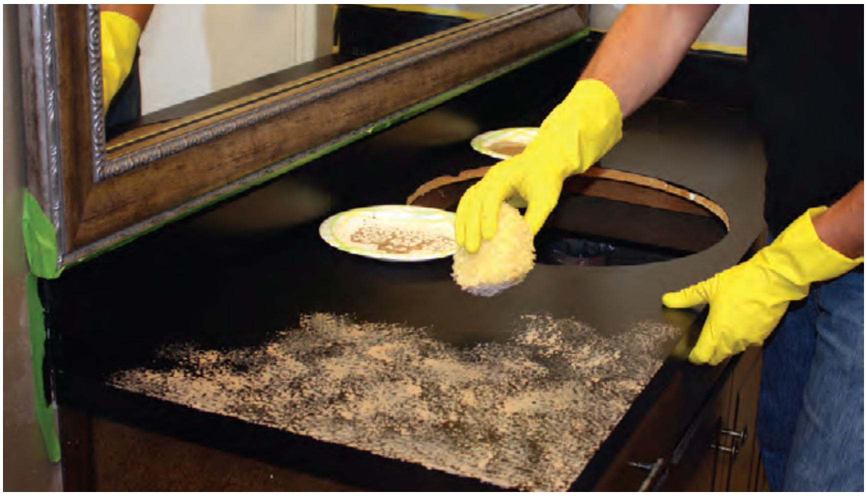
clean your roller and brush with warm water, because you will use them again to apply the glossy top coat. Allow the primer to dry for 6 hours.

THREE LAYERS OF PAINT

The kit includes a sponge with a special texture to impart the granite-style finish when applying the mineral paint. Cut off approximately a 1-1/2 inch of the sponge to use on your backsplash. Use a 2- to 3-inch piece for your countertop. Before dipping into the paint, soak both pieces in water and wring them out; the remaining moisture will prevent the sponge from soaking up too much of the mineral paint. Start with the can of paint labeled "Step 2," which is the Brown Feldspar color. To achieve the granite effect it is critical that the paints are applied in the order indicated on the packaging. The successive shades provide color depth for a more realistic and natural appearance.



Shake the paint can and pour a small amount onto a paper plate. Then, holding the flat, cut edge of the larger sponge in your hand, blot its un-cut, textured side in the mineral. Dab the sponge on a second paper plate to remove excess paint. To apply

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the paint, lightly stamp the coated side of the sponge onto your countertop using quick, up-and-down movements. Blot the sponge randomly over the countertop surface, but avoid making sideways swipes with the sponge. Swipes leave brush-type marks in the paint that do not look like natural granite. Stick to vertical, up-and-down stamping. Press firm enough so most of the sponge's face makes contact with the countertop.

Occasionally, turn the sponge to stamp with a different part of the face to mix up the pattern. The Gianni kit includes a square of black construction paper as a sample surface to practice your application.

Work in 3-foot sections at a time. Be sure not to completely cover your black primer coat, leaving coin-sized black areas showing through the paint. Each mineral coat will reduce the amount of the black primer coat that shows. Repeat this stamping process with the Inca Gold ("Step 3") and White Limestone ("Step 4") minerals in one section before moving to the next one. This allows your minerals to mix while they're still wet.

Along the edges and corners of the countertop and backsplash,

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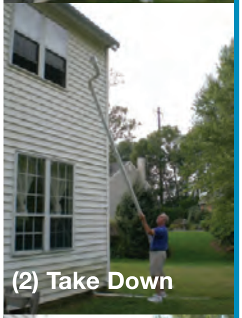
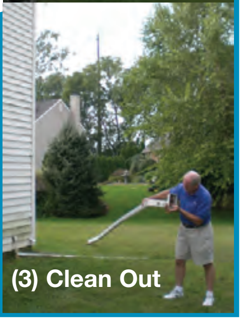

(2) Take Down


(3) Clean Out

I found it difficult to stamp on the paint without leaving the accidental brush stroke. It was easier to use a small, stiff artists' brush to dab on the paint in narrow or confined areas. Again, repeat the three-layer mineral application process for the remaining sections of the countertop. Apply the paints sparingly and cautiously at first, stepping back frequently to appraise your handiwork. Keep in mind that it's easy go back and add minerals to areas even when they're dry, but it's very difficult to remove the paint after it has been applied. Once all three coats have been applied, you can then add further depth with light accents and highlights.

Rinse out your sponges and use new paper plates for blotting the sponge as needed. Once you're satisfied with the look of the mineral paint, allow it to dry for at least two hours. Then, lightly sand the countertop surface with a 320-grit or higher abrasive to remove any high spots or particles. Note: I used a Micro Zip Sander on the backsplash edges, which is designed with a narrow 1-inch wide sanding pad—perfect for detail work (www.zipsander.com).

APPLY THE TOPCOAT

After the minerals have dried, lightly shake your container of Clear Topcoat ("Step 5") and pour a small amount into a paint tray. Slowly and lightly roll on the topcoat in 3-foot sections. Then, roll back over what you just rolled, using long, overlapping rows, running the entire width or length of the countertop section. Allow the first topcoat to dry for 8 hours. Sand down any high spots with a very fine abrasive. Then apply the second and final layer of topcoat using the same process as the first. Avoid using more than two coats of topcoat or the glossy finish could become cloudy.

Once the final topcoat has completely dried, carefully score along the edge of the painter's tape before removing to avoid damaging the Gianni surface.

FINAL THOUGHTS

With careful application, you can indeed use the Gianni kit to create a pattern very similar to natural granite. However, the fate of your success lies largely in the hands of the user, so if you have zero artistic vision, then you might have some difficulty achieving a convincing blend of

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color tones to mimic natural stone. That being said, I was pleased with the result of our experiment. I felt I had closely mimicked the granite appearance, and the topcoat gave the surface a nice luster. I will note that the paint will not smooth a textured countertop, and the final product looks most like true granite when applied to a smooth surface. However, by virtue of painting the laminate seams, the countertop will have a more continuous slab-like appearance than traditional laminate. And, when it comes to ease of use, you're unlikely to find a simpler, more affordable way to completely redecorate a countertop surface. Learn more about the Gianni system at www.liquidstainlesssteel.com. **EHT**

I sanded the edges of the backsplash with a Micro Zip Sander and then rolled on two coats of Clear Topcoat for a glossy finish.

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BUILD A SPIRAL STAIRCASE

By David Ask

Are you planning a new addition to your home or business and realize that you need a more convenient way to access the new area—but you don't have room for a conventional stairway? Perhaps you're adding a workout room on a lower level and need a way to get to that area from the master bedroom. Have you built a deck and need quick access to another level?

Consider the advantages of a spiral staircase. It takes less space than a conventional stair and can be a beautiful conversation piece as well.

Although a spiral staircase cannot be used as the main access to an area of your home (per building code requirements), it can be a convenient way to get from one level to another, and, it will take half the space.

You can build your own spiral staircase with a little bit of welding skill and about $400.00 worth of steel, even at current higher steel prices. I have built 18 spiral stairways in the last 15 years, all with some wooden components (treads and handrails). This article explains how to do so.

I recently removed a second-story deck from my house because it was rotting and was in a bad location, in full view of traffic, on a busy street in front of our house. Access to the deck was through a door in the kitchen/dining area. My wife and I decided that a new steel spiral stairway should take the place of the deck to provide a fire escape and to add a beautiful accent to our home.

Photo courtesy of Salter Spiral Stairs.

BUILD A SPIRAL STAIRCASE

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- **Base plate**
- **Treads**
- **Newel posts (one at each step)**
- **Balusters between the newel posts**
- **Handrail**

PLANNING AND DESIGN

Every spiral staircase is built around a center column that rests on a single point at its base (See Fig. 1). I dug an 18-inch hole in the ground below the kitchen door 4 feet deep—below the frost line in our Minnesota climate. I filled a cardboard tube with concrete to a height 3 inches above grade and level with the top of the basement block wall. I used a trowel to smooth and level the concrete.

Now we had a good foundation to build on. I needed just one measurement to get started: the total rise.

The total height from the concrete foundation to the top of the top step was exactly 9 feet or 108 inches. I recorded that figure and chose to make the stairway turn to the left (counterclockwise) when walking up.

But first I had to consider a few building code requirements in order to lay out the stairway.

The national building code requires that each tread must be at least 26 inches wide. Each tread must be at least 7-1/2 inches deep at a point 12 inches from its narrow end.

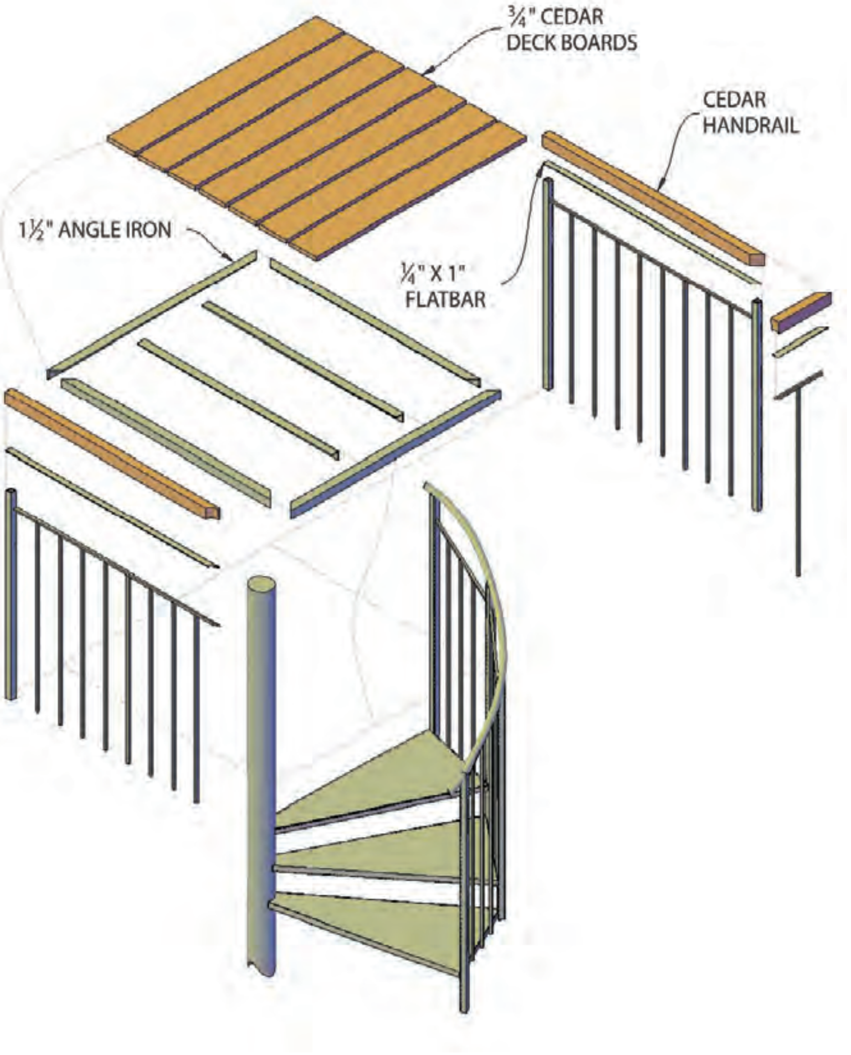
There must be a minimum of 6 feet, 6 inches of headroom at each step. The handrail must be 34 to 36 inches above each tread nose. The stair railing balusters must not allow a 4-inch ball to pass through.

Additionally, the upper platform must extend 7 inches beyond a door that may open out onto it, measured when the door is fully open.

The planning and layout for this exterior stairway will apply to any spiral staircase installed anywhere to any height and at any diameter.

Because of the applicable building codes, a stairway that is about 9 feet tall works well when it needs to make approximately one full turn through its vertical travel. That means that the first step at the bottom is directly below the last step at the top. Someone using the stairway is facing the same direction at the top and at the bottom steps. This combination of a 360-degree turn over 9 feet of vertical travel also allows the proper headroom required by the building code.

To determine the number of steps needed, we divide the 108 inches of vertical height by 7. A 7-inch rise per step is ideal. 108 inches ÷ 7 inches = 15.43



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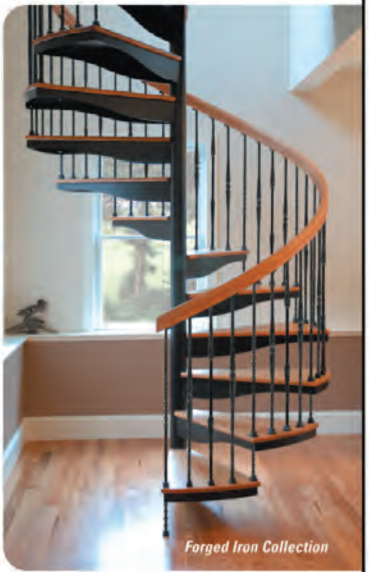

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steps. Since we cannot have an uneven number of steps, we will choose 15 steps. The top deck will be the 15th step, so we will make 14 steps plus the deck. Then 108 inches ÷ 15 steps = 7.2 inches. We've now determined that each rise (the vertical distance from one step to another) is 7.2 inches.

The depth of each tread (the run) at the narrow end will be 4 inches to allow it to fit a 4-inch center column with room for welds on the top and sides.

Step run (the horizontal depth of each step at the wide outside end) can be determined by first choosing the outside diameter of the stairway. The building code requires a minimum of 5 feet, 2 inches because of the tread width minimum of 26 inches. If we add the width of two 26-inch steps, a center column and a handrail, we find that a 62-inch diameter is a minimum for any spiral staircase. I chose a 70-inch diameter to make the stairway easier to walk. That made the treads each 32 inches wide instead of the 26-inch minimum.

For purposes of sizing the treads at the outside end, let's consider the outside diameter of the stairway without the balusters and handrail. The center column and two treads make a total diameter of 68 inches.

The circumference of the stairway is the diameter in inches multiplied by 3.1416. So, 68 inches x 3.1416 = 210 inches (rounded to the nearest inch). Since we will make 14 steps, 210÷14=15 inches. The steps need to overlap by one inch to accommodate the newel posts that tie them together and support the handrail and balusters. So we will make the treads 16-inch deep (the horizontal measurement, front to back) at the outside end. The newel posts are welded to the heel of one tread and the nose of the tread above it. (See Fig.2).

So far we have the following information: The stairway total rise is 108 inches (7.2-inch per step). The stairway will turn left on the way up. The stairway has 15 steps (14 steps plus the top deck). The stairway will make one full 360-degree turn through

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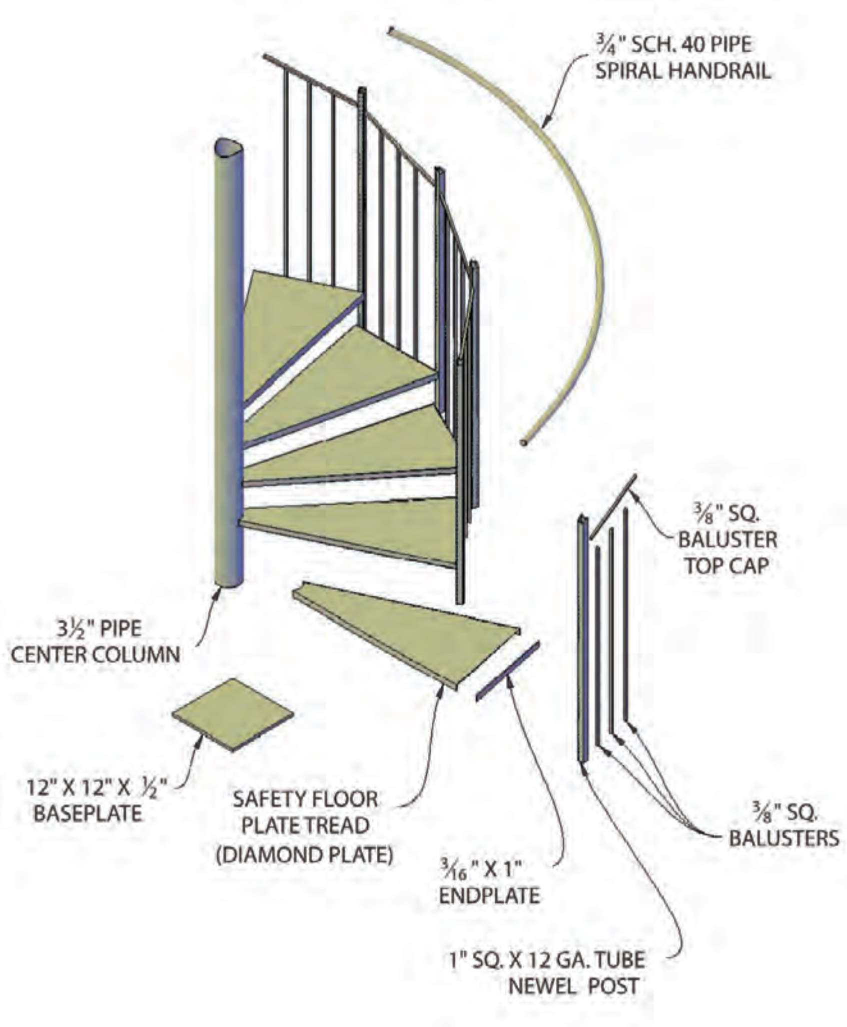
its travel. The outside diameter is 70 inches, including the newel posts and handrail. The handrail will be 36 inches high.

SUMMARY OF CALCULATIONS

1. **Number of steps = Total height ÷ 7 (rounded to nearest whole step).**
2. **Stair circumference= Diameter x 3.1416.**
3. **Depth of step (outside end) = Circumference ÷ number of steps + 1 inch.**

THE TOP DECK

The top deck, which, for planning purposes is the 15th step, needs to be at least as wide as the top step, but can be wider. I chose to make mine 42 inches wide to make ample room for the screen door to open easily and for easy access to the first step. The deck must extend 7 inches beyond the screen door when the door is wide open. My door is 36 inches wide, so I made the top deck 44 inches deep (from the house to the outer edge of the deck). I made the guard rails on the upper deck 36 inches high with baluster spacing just under 4 inches.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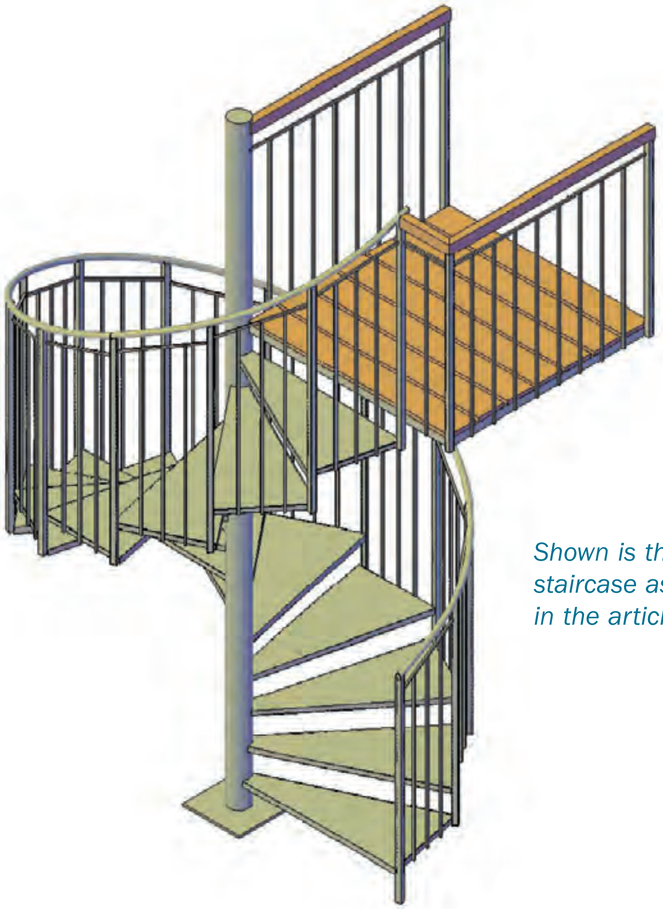
CENTER COLUMN

I used a 3-1/2-inch schedule 40 pipe for the center column, which measures 4 inches outside. I cut it 146 inches long. That allowed 108 inches for 15 steps, 36 inches for the top guard railing, and 2 inches extra for the sake of appearance.

Then, I capped the top end with a 1/8-inch thick round plate and ground the weld smooth. The bottom end got a square 1/2-inch plate measuring 12 by 12 inches, welded all around. I punched 7/16-inch holes in each corner of the plate to receive 3/8-inch concrete anchor bolts to attach it to the foundation.

In order to make the layout easier, I laid the column horizontally into a simple jig that I made



Shown is the completed staircase as explained in the article.

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many years ago for just this purpose. A couple of sawhorses will work just as well. I then laid out soapstone marks for each step approximately 7.2 inches apart, beginning at both ends and adjusting the spacing of the marks in between for equally spaced steps. As discussed earlier, the top mark is 108 inches from the bottom end of the column and is the attaching point for the top deck.

TREAD CONSTRUCTION

Because the stairway was to be used outdoors, I made the treads from 1/8-inch steel safety floor plate (also called diamond tread). I cut the parts with a plasma cutter and took them to a local manufacturer to have them formed. I used the measurements discussed earlier but added 1 inch on the front and back sides to form a stiffening edge that also made the treads look heavier. The outside end got a 3/16-by-1-inch flat welded across the end to complete the enclosed look.

I tacked the treads onto the center column at my marks, being sure to get them perpendicular to the column in both directions. I was also careful to advance them for the left-hand turn and to overlap them by one in. After I had a few treads tacked in place I began to attach newel posts at the outside ends

MATERIALS LIST

Your list may be different depending on your stair dimensions and style.

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3/16 x 1 Flat Bar—19 ft.
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of the treads, tying the heel on one tread to the nose of the tread above it at the outside edge of the treads and extending 35 inches above the top tread. The handrail added later made the railing 36 inches high.

The newels are 1-inch square tubing cut to 43 inches, with the top ends cut at approximately 33-degrees to approximate the slope of the stairway. The angle is not critical because the handrail will be welded to the top ends of all the newels.

When all the treads and newels were tacked in place I returned to finish all the welding at the center column at each step and around each newel attached to the treads.

The most fun part of the whole project was to make the spiral

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handrail. I used a 3/4-inch pipe (measures about 1-inch outside) about 21 feet long, running it through my sheet roll machine to first form a circle about 7-1/2 feet in diameter. This process flattened the pipe just slightly and made it fit a hand better. I then tied one end of the pipe to a power pole outside and walked away with the other end, stretching it into a spiral about 9 feet long.

Then, beginning at the middle of the stairway, I tacked the handrail onto the top ends of the newel posts, heating and bending the handrail slightly as needed. When the handrail was in place with no kinks or bulges, I finished the welds and ground them smooth.

The top deck came next, where I used 1-1/2-by-1/8-inch angle iron for the frame, punching 1/4-inch holes for the deck boards I would later bolt on. The deck was 42-by-44 inches with two cross members to help support the load in the center. I notched one corner just slightly to accommodate the center column and welded it in place at the 108-inch mark on the column. Bull-nosed, treated deck boards were added later.

Salter Spiral Stairs manufactures staircases shipped as a kit.

Next, I cut the corner posts (1-inch square tube, 35 inches long) for the deck railing, along with the 3/8-inch square balusters and 1/4-by-1-1/4-inch flat bar cross members at the top for the railing and welded them in place. The spaces between the 15 newel posts were then filled in with three 3/8-inch square bar balusters (See Fig. 2).

THE FINISH

With all the welding done and all welds ground and polished, the staircase was ready for a finish. I chose to paint it myself with a good rust-inhibiting primer and an oil-based, flat black paint. A powder-coated finish is a great choice too, but can be quite expensive (as much as $800 for an average staircase). It is more durable, but some colors fade and any scratches are not easily repaired.

After the staircase was set in place on the concrete column and bolted to the house with 3/8-inch lag screws, I added cedar handrails around the top deck, fastened to the 1/4-inch flat bars from the bottom with No. 8, 1-inch wood screws.

Remember, your materials list may be different, depending on your stair dimensions and style. If your staircase will be used indoors, you might consider hardwood treads supported by angle iron frames. Another option is plywood treads, supported by angle-iron frames, that are enclosed in carpet. **EHT**

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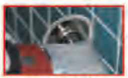

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EASY STEPS TO REPLACING A BAY WINDOW

By Kathy Ziprik

Want more space in a room? Bump out a window! One of the easiest ways to gain space in a home is to replace existing single or double hung windows with a bay window.

Contractor Steve Roth recently tackled the project to enhance the interior and exterior of a rental property he purchased. “From the interior, the bay window provides a cozy area for reading or a sunny spot for the family cat,” says Roth. “On the exterior, a bay creates more dimension and appeal to a home. This house originally had a flat, uninteresting exterior with three side-by-side double hung windows. Adding the bay with a roof overhang added a visual feature to the outside of the home.”

To start, Roth measured the rough opening of the existing window space and then ordered a low-maintenance, vinyl-framed Simonton window. “One of the major reasons I selected a Simonton window is because they have a unique cable support system for bay and bow windows that makes installation very fast and easy,” says Roth. “The system uses a hook that attaches to the 5/16-inch all-thread at the top of the window unit. This eliminates the need to

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use knee braces or corbels to support the bay unit."

The cable system incorporates a zero-slip clamp with both coarse and fine adjustments to be made at the front of the unit during installation. The design provides more flexibility to the installation of the unit in various situations, including those with limited clearance.

"Another reason we selected this particular bay window was because of the availability of Simonton's Energy Tax Credit Glass Package," says Roth. "It's an extremely energy-efficient window and allows us to apply for the federal tax credit." According to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, homeowners can receive up to $1,500 back in energy saving improvements to the home in 2009 and 2010.

"By selecting this glass package, we're able to save on energy bills every day of the year and gain tax credit back at the end of the year. That's a tremendous advantage for anyone replacing windows in the home. Just remember to save the labels from the windows and the actual receipts for the window purchase to use when preparing your taxes."

GETTING STARTED

When measuring the rough opening for the unit, Roth measured at three locations: top, middle and bottom of the opening. He did this both vertically and horizontally to have an accurate measurement for ordering. Additionally, he measured the wall thickness from the inside of the opening to the outside of the exterior siding.

Next, Roth decided on a bay window with operable side features to allow for ventilation. While some bay windows contain all fixed units, the customization opportunity is available to select casement or double hung windows to allow natural air flow into the house.

Once the Simonton bay window arrived, Roth gathered a few friends and a variety of tools together to tackle the easy installation project. For tools, he used a tape measure, 4-foot level, No. 2 Phillips Bit (4 inches long), No. 3 Phillips screwdriver (6 inches long), 1/2-inch wrench, cordless screw gun, 1/8-inch drill bit (4 inches long), 3/32-inch drill bit,

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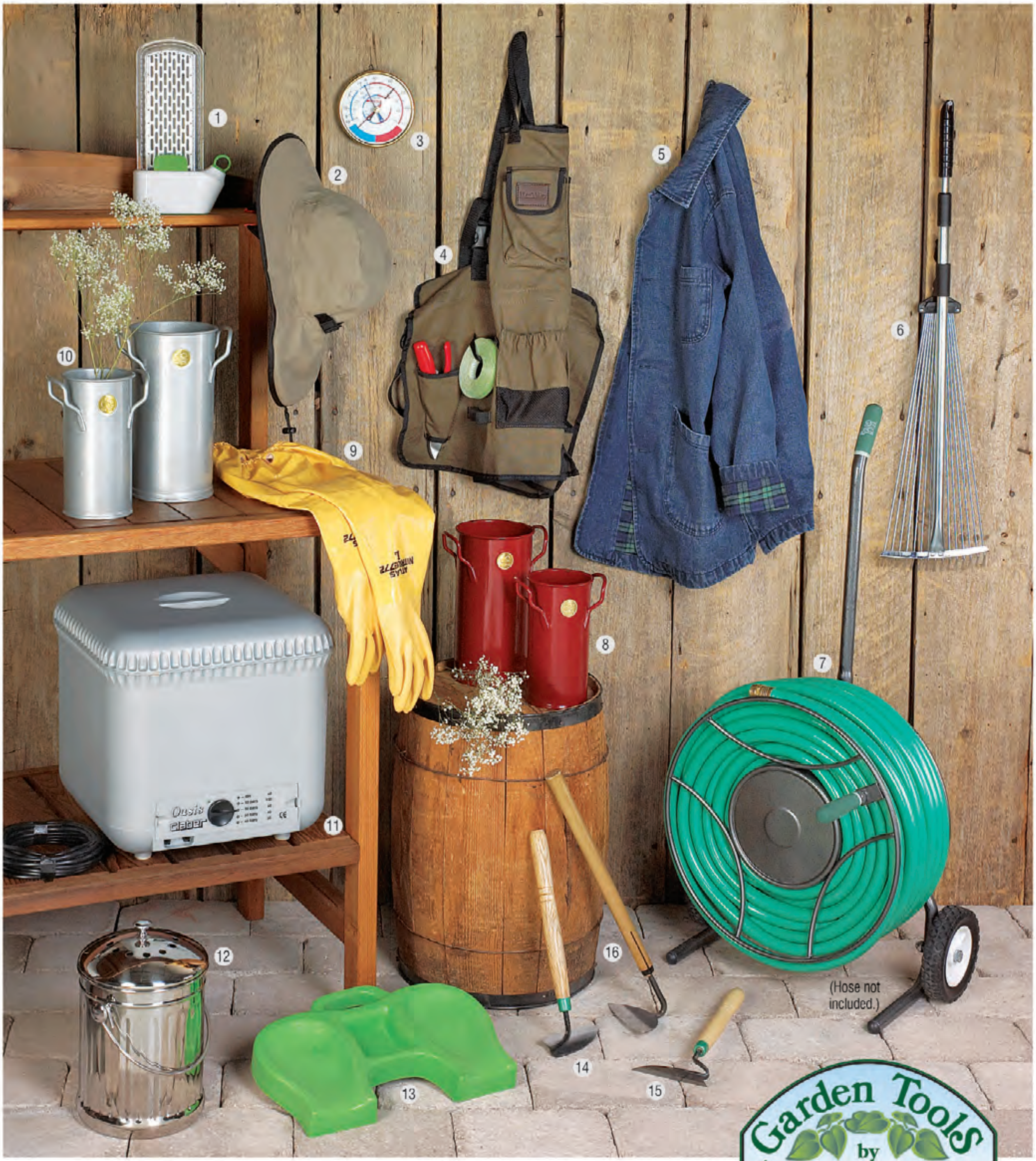

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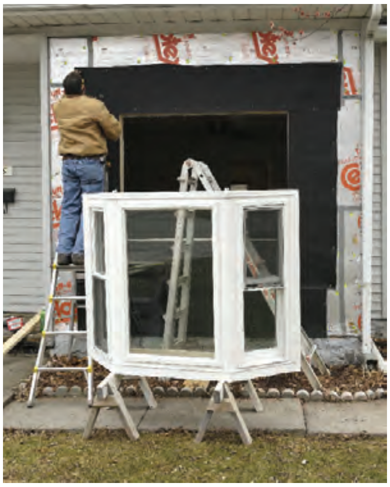
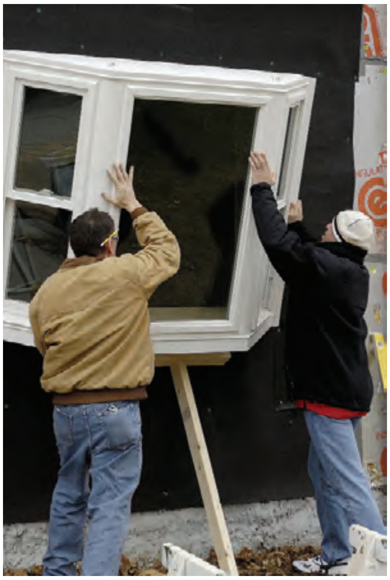
Garden Tools by Lee Valley
2009

EASY STEPS TO REPLACING A BAY WINDOW

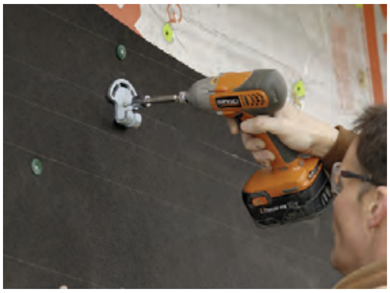
caulk gun and color-matched silicone caulk.

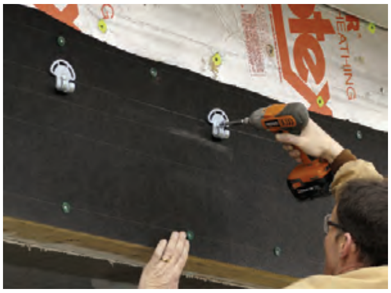


Step 1: Remove the old windows and prepare the rough opening, leveling off the sill if necessary. Make sure the bay window fits into the opening plumb, level and square.

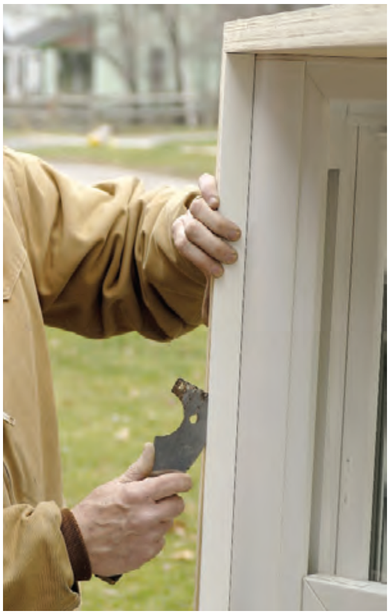


Step 2: Install both wall brackets 12 to 15 inches above the rough opening using one of the two 1/4-by-3-inch long lag screws provided in the Simonton kit. Use the hole in the center of the wall bracket for this lag screw. Keep in mind the roof structure height of the unit. (Note: the cables can be installed at any degree between 15 and 90 degrees from horizontal measured between the cable and head board. Wall brackets can be placed as much as 45 degrees to either side of vertical measured from the window hook mounted to the top of the bay unit. This flexibility ensures the wall bracket can be anchored to a wall stud.)

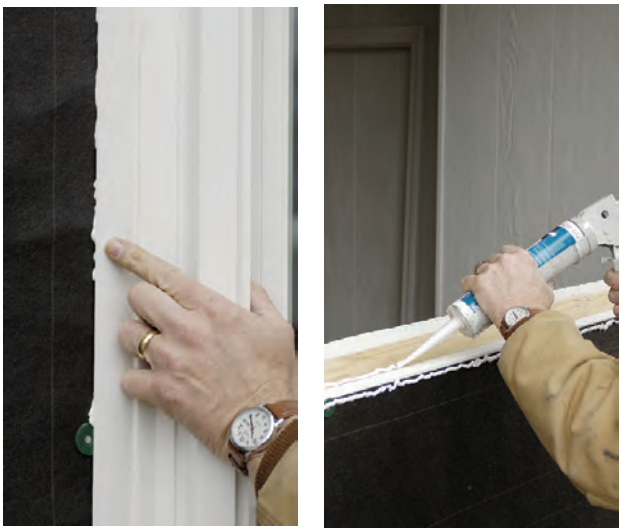




Step 3: Remove all wooden stripping blocks from the underside of the bay window.



Step 4: Carefully remove the jamb veneers along the inside of the jambs and save for later use.



Step 5: Caulk along the edges of the rough opening and the sill plate, as well as the F-channels along the perimeter. Place the bay unit in the opening and place a support underneath the nose of the bay unit, making sure the window is level.

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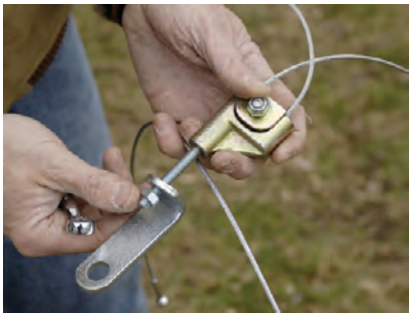
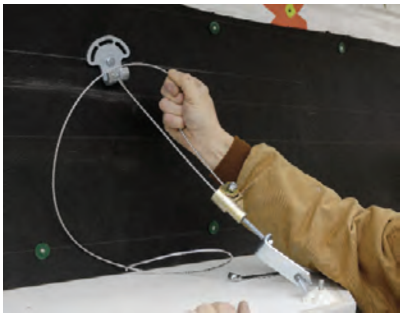
Step 6: Using the hardware from the cable support system pack that came with the Simonton unit, attach the angled hook bracket to the window hook that is already installed on the 5/16-inch all-thread at the top of the bay window. Make sure that the adjustment nut on the main cable support body is in the center of the adjustment tread.

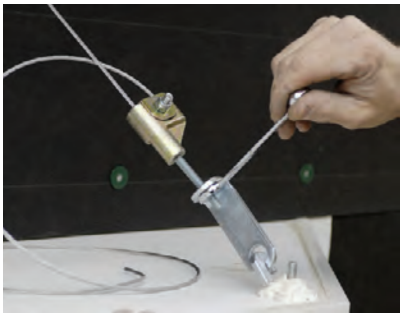


Step 7: Attach the other end of the cable with the swaged ball to the wall bracket.



Step 8: Make certain that the clamping insert on the main support assembly is loose enough to allow the cable to be adjusted. Pull on the tag end of the cable to take out any slack in the cable between the window and the wall bracket.

Step 9: Tighten the 1/2-inch nylon lock nut on the clamping insert to a torque rating of 15 foot/pounds.



Step 10: Rotate the wall bracket if necessary to maintain proper alignment with the cable

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and attach the second 1/2-by-3-inch lag screw in the appropriate slot directly above the center screw. This ensures the lag screw is installed in a wall stud or other solid mounting member.

Step 11: Repeat steps 6-10 for the second cable support.

Step 12: Once both cable supports have been installed, remove the support from under the nose of the bay unit so that the unit is now supported by the cables.

Step 13: To level the bay unit, use a wrench to rotate the adjustment nut on the adjustment thread. Rotate clockwise to raise the nose of the unit, or counter-clockwise to lower the nose of the unit. Adjust each cable support until the unit is level from side to side as well as from front to back. Once the unit is level, tighten the jam nut onto the hook bracket.

Step 14: Check for an even reveal between the sash and the frame to be certain the weather-stripping is sealing properly in all areas.

Step 15: Once the bay window is plumb, level and square, insert installation screws through the inside jambs. The screws should be placed 8 to 12 inches apart, starting 4 inches from the top and bottom. Offset screw locations for more support. Shims should be used to establish spacing at anchoring points and

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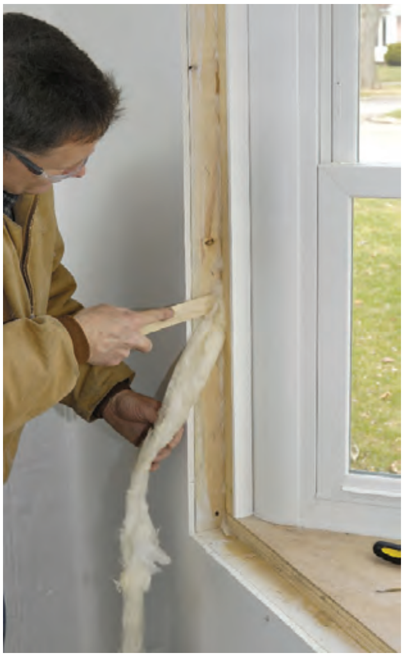
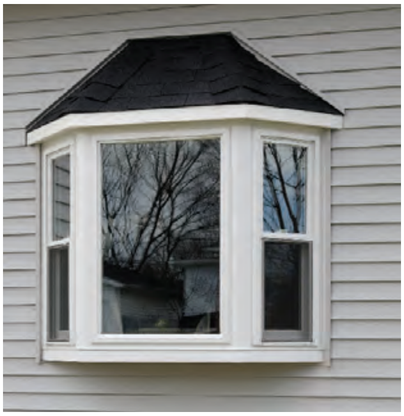
should be penetrated by the installation screw. Do NOT over tighten the screws, as this could cause the frame to bow. Do not place screws through the head or seat board. Recheck the sash for proper operation once the screws have been installed.

Step 16: After the installation screws are in place, glue the wood veneer back in place on the inside of the jambs and fill the gap between the jambs and rough opening with insulation.





Step 17: All projected units require a roofing system after installation since the top of the unit is not designed to prevent water penetration without a roof. For this project, a hip asphalt shingle roof was created projecting from the house.

Step 18: Finish off the interior of the bay unit and install knee braces as required.

Step 19: Inspect all exterior sealant joints in case any joints were pulled apart during installation. Reseal any broken seams with the sealant supplied with the unit.

Step 20: Check the successful operation of the ventilating units, clean the job site and enjoy the new bay window! **EHT**

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ARTIFICIAL STONE UP CLOSE

Lightweight and easy to install, artificial stone is a popular alternative building material.

By Monte Burch

When the first caveman rolled a stone in front of his cave to keep out the animals, stone became a building material. Stone has continued to be a popular construction material throughout the ages, and is just as popular today. These days, however, artificial stone has become increasingly popular. Weight is one reason. Less dense and lighter in weight than natural stone, manufactured stone is easier to handle, store and install. Less weight also means artificial stone can be applied in more areas, and with less support, than would be required for natural stone. Yet, the material has all the beauty of natural stone.

The selection of artificial stone styles is also greater than natural stone on a local basis. Artificial stone allows you to utilize styles not commonly found all across the country. These include polished river rock, fieldstone, ledgerock and even simulated quarried stone. The latter is much more economical than natural quarried stone. In fact, selection of the style and color can be confusing with all the possibilities available. The artificial stone being shown in this article is Dutch Quality Stone, in fieldstone style (www.dutchqualitystone.com).

In the project detailed in this article, a fireplace with chimney was constructed of concrete block. The fireplace was faced with natural fieldstone, but not enough was available for the tall, two and half-story chimney. Artificial fieldstone was selected to match the fireplace stone. The homeowners added a few natural stones to help blend the chimney with the fireplace. Before you choose the product and decide to install the stone, check out the various products available, as well as the various manufacturer's installation manuals available.

As with natural stone, installation is fairly easy, but hard work. One advantage is you can work a little at a time, which is actually the best tactic for most installations. Installing artificial stone is a lot of fun and allows you to be really creative, resulting in a beautiful project you'll not only be proud to show off, but will add value to your home.

TOOLS & MATERIALS

You will need a few masonry tools, including safety glasses, wheelbarrow, mixing hoe, hock and mason's trowels. The hock is to hold the mortar, but a plastic bucket can be used to transport and hold the mortar if you're working on a scaffold and ladder for a high project such as the chimney. You will also need a metal jointing tool, wooden stick, or better yet a large, round-headed bolt, a grout bag and whisk broom. Several plastic buckets and soft rags are also handy. And you'll need a tape measure, level and other basic woodworking tools.

Even artificial stone is cumbersome, and you will also be toting and working with mortar. Sturdy scaffolding is necessary for high jobs such as this chimney.

Artificial stone can be cut with masonry wide-mouth nippers, a hatchet, mason's chisel and hammer, a masonry cut-off saw, or using a masonry blade in an angle grinder. Make sure you

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The product chosen for this chimney project is Dutch Quality Stone in Pennsylvania Field Stone to match the natural stone fireplace.

The proper mortar mix is extremely important for a good masonry job. If using mortar components, first measure out and mix the dry materials. Then add water a little at a time, mixing the dry materials into the water and wet mix. A wheelbarrow and mason's hoe can be used.

wear eye protection, and for the latter two you'll also need a dust mask. All cutting chores should be done outside.

After determining the style and type of stone desired, the next step is to estimate the amount of materials needed. Artificial stone typically comes in boxes of flats and corners. The latter are L-shaped to wrap around outside corners and create the illusion of full stones. Measure the length and width of the project and multiply the measurement to determine the square footage.

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Then measure the linear feet of the outside corners. You will also need to know the square footage of the corner pieces, according to the specific manufacturer. For example, one linear foot of Owens Corning Cultured Stone corner piece covers 3/4 of a square foot of flat area (www.culturedstone.com), whereas one linear foot of Dutch Quality Stone covers 1/2 square foot. Subtract the flat area of the corners from the square footage of the flats required. Subtract the square footage of any doors, windows and other openings. It's a good idea to add about 10 percent extra materials for

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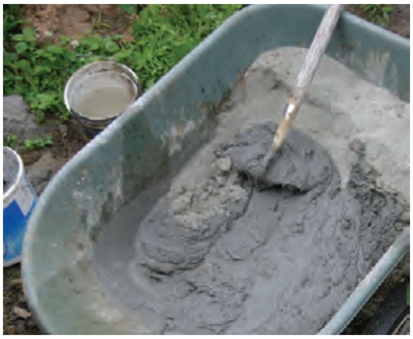

The mortar consistency should be stiff enough that the mortar won't slump back down when pulled up with the hoe, yet not too dry and crumbly or soupy.

A Crete Sheet, a heavy-duty plastic sheet with handles, makes mixing small mortar batches quick and easy.

Alternate lifting the handles to mix the materials. Cleanup is also fast and easy.

In many instances you'll need to add mortar color to the mortar mix.

Many artificial stone products come with "corners" consisting of a short and long leg. When positioned, these give the appearance of a full stone used for the corner.

cutting, trimming and fitting. It's also important to know if the style chosen is sold based on the coverage with a standard 1/2-inch mortar joint, or tight-fitted such as ledgerock. In addition to the stone you'll need Type N Mortar, mortar color (if desired), aggregates (sand) or premixed Type N mortar and potable water.

Artificial stone may be applied to any number of interior or exterior surfaces. A weather-resistant barrier must be used on all exterior and interior mortar applications, except for those over masonry and concrete. Make sure you follow local building code requirements for installation of the materials, including the waterproof barrier. If installing on surfaces other than masonry or concrete, a mesh or metal lath must be applied over the water barrier. All exterior surfaces must have flashing installed at water entrances, and the finished edge of applied stone must be a minimum of 4 inches above an earth grade or 2 inches above concrete. Before applying the stones, read and

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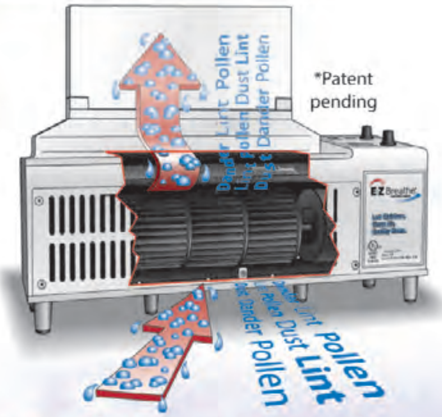

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make sure you follow all of the manufacturer's installation instructions.

INSTALLATION BASICS

Yes, there is an art to laying stone, whether natural or artificial. Artificial stone commonly comes boxed, and the first step is to lay out the stones so you can readily see all the sizes, shapes and colors. In most instances you'll want to lay the stones with a variety of sizes and colors in the overall design. Use small stones near large ones, varying the textures and sizes. Get everything ready, including tools, ladders and other supplies.

One of the most important keys to any type of masonry job is properly mixing the mortar. You can use premixed mortar, but on larger jobs individual components may be the best choice. The proportions of a standard mortar mix is either Portland Cement or Blended Cement and hydrated lime, mixed one part to 4-1/2 to 6 parts aggregate. An easier mix is one part Type N Masonry Cement to 2-1/2 to 3 parts aggregate. I normally simply count shovels of the latter, using a masonry shovel. Don't mix more mortar than you can use in 30 to 45 minutes. I normally use one shovel of Type N Mortar Cement to three shovels of sand. If you have help, you might double this mix. The materials are placed in a wheelbarrow and thoroughly mixed while dry using a masonry hoe, which has holes in it to allow for quicker and easier mixing of the materials.

An easier mixing method is to use the Crete Sheet (www.cretesheet.com), a plastic sheet with handles. You can mix a batch in about 5 minutes and cleanup is easier. Once the dry material is evenly mixed, add the water a little at a time. If using mortar color, add the proper amount of mortar color to the first batch of water and thoroughly mix. Then add this to the dry mix. Using the hoe, incorporate the water into a bit of the dry mix until thoroughly blended. Then either add more water or pull in more of the dry mix with the hoe and continue mixing until the entire batch is evenly

Artificial stones also come as "flats," and it's important to spread out all the stones for the project so you have a good variety to pick from as you set the stones in place.

Before setting a stone, lay it dry and check it for fit.

Mortar can be applied in several ways. A "scratch coat" or thin layer can first be applied with a mason trowel to some surfaces. This can also be used as the setting mortar in some instances.

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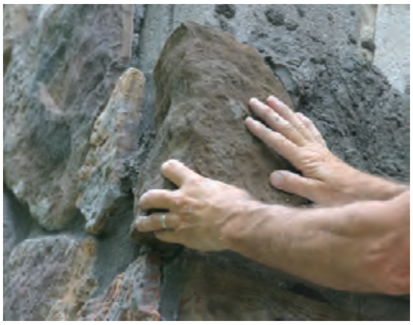
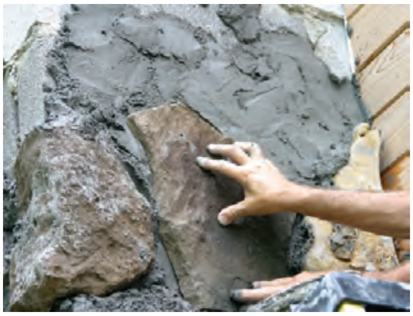
mixed. The proper amount of water is important. Too little water and the mortar will be crumbly and dry. Too much water and the mix will be soupy, messy and won’t hold the stones properly. A proper mix will be firm, yet moist. It will stay when pulled up with the hoe and will not slump down. Or, pick up the mortar with a trowel and turn the trowel sideways. The mortar should not slide or run off. Allow the mortar mix to set for about 10 minutes before use.

Now you’re ready to apply the mortar and set the stones. The mortar and stone pieces can be applied in two methods. In some instances the mortar and stones can be applied from the top down, and this does help in keeping the set stones clean. Most of us less experienced masons, however, will have better luck setting stones from the bottom up. This is particularly so with corner stones.

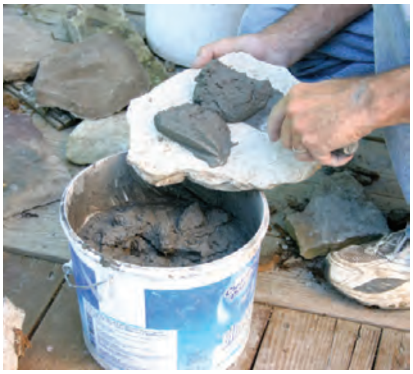
If installing over metal lath, use a mason’s trowel to apply the mortar in a 1/2- to 3/4-inch thick layer “scratch” coat. It’s important not to spread too much mortar or it may set up before you can apply the stones. On smooth masonry surfaces, such as concrete or concrete blocks, the mortar will have the frustrating tendency to slump down and fall off. One tactic is to fling small handfuls of mortar onto the surface, then trowel



The stone is set in this mortar. In most instances it’s easiest to set the stones from the bottom up, although this method requires more cleanup.



Gently wiggle to force some mortar out around the edges. Do not apply force or you will push too much mortar from behind the stone causing it to loosen.



Another method, and a less messy method, is to “butter” the back of the stones with mortar using a trowel.

Then set the mortar stones in place. In hot weather, dampen the setting surface and the back of the stone with a light spray of water.

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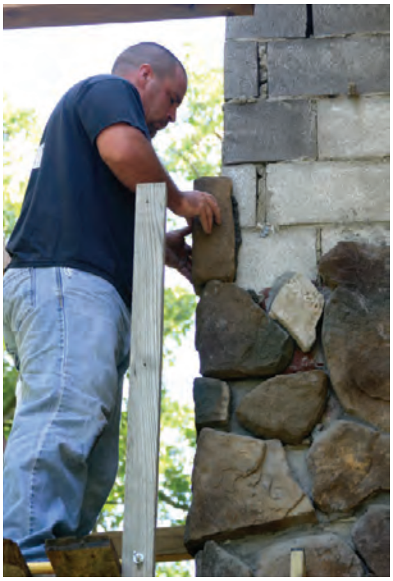
smooth to obtain the thickness needed. It's messy, but it works. The easiest method is to use a mason's trowel to "butter" the back of the stone with mortar and then press the stone in place. It's important to have complete coverage between the mortar bed and the back surface of the stone. With the mortar and/or stone in place, gently press the selected stone against and into the mortar. Wiggle the stone slightly to force a bit of mortar out around the edges of the stone. Don't press too hard or you'll push the mortar out from behind the stone.

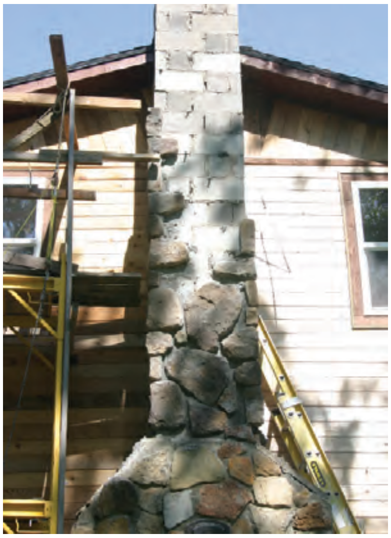
Keep a bucket of water and clean clothes on hand to wash mortar off your hands and help keep the stone surfaces clean.

Regardless of the method used, it takes a bit of practice. Joint width in many cases should average about 1/2 inch. This will, of course, vary with the style of stone used. Fieldstone looks better with more variance, and it's also harder to precisely fit these shapes. A "looser" look has a more natural appearance. On some styles, however, it's important to keep mortar joints as consistent as possible. Fit larger pieces first, and then fit in smaller pieces.



Corners are set first.

You may need to cut some stones to fit, especially with styles other than fieldstone. Stones can be cut using wide-mouthed nippers, or a hatchet. A masonry blade in an angle grinder can also be used. Or use a powered mason's cut-off



The short and long legs of the corners should alternate as they are set.

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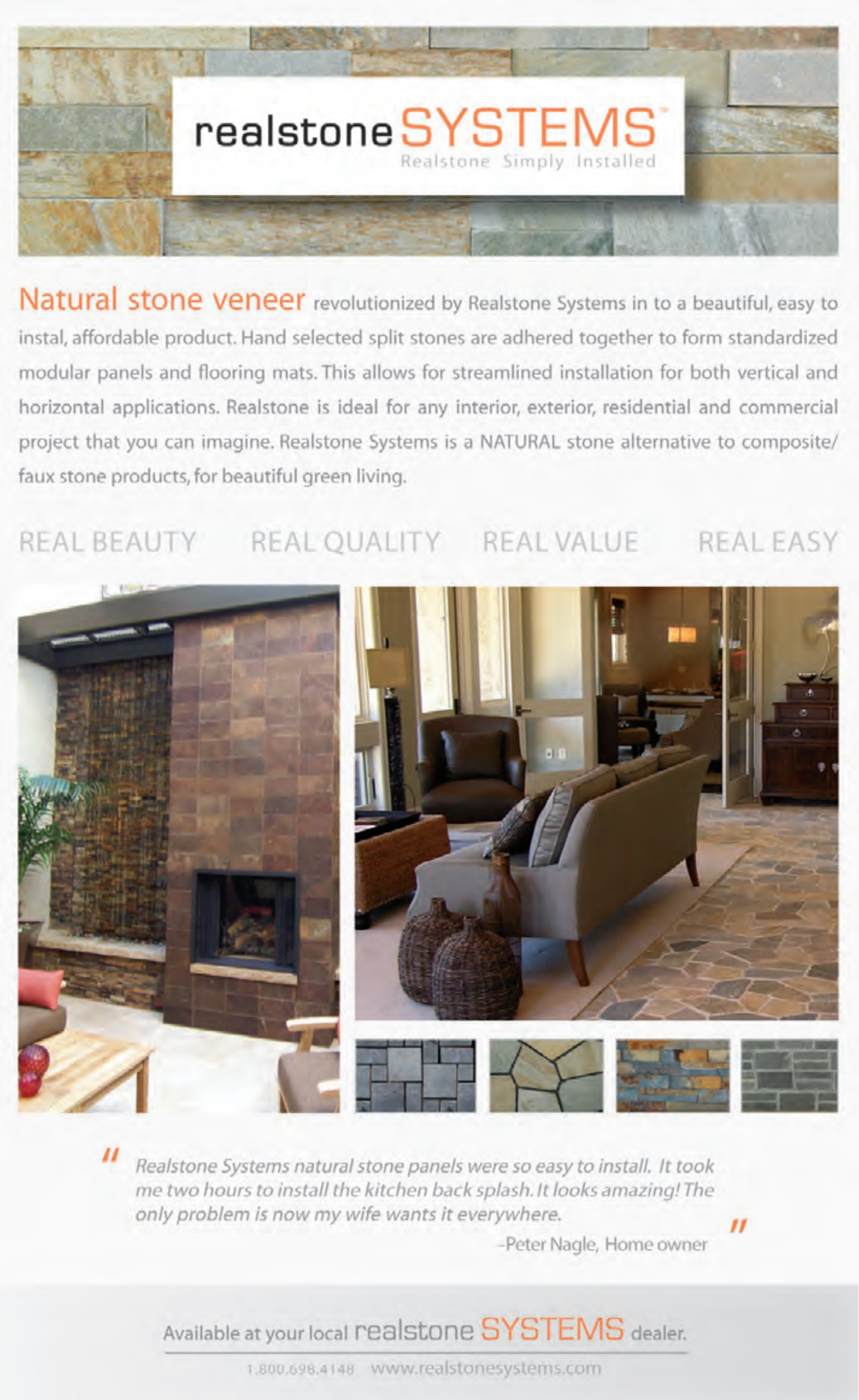
saw. Always wear safety glasses and a dust mask. Place mortar on the cut edges and, if possible, position the cut edges so they won't be visible, for instance above or below eye-level. For materials such as ledgestone, the stones are fit tightly together. If laying such a tight-fitting style, the scratch coat must be completely covered with a bed of mortar, not only to conceal the scratch coat, but to prevent creating open spaces that can trap water. Try not to get mortar on the front surface of the stones. Unlike real stone, artificial stone is painted and abrasive methods normally used to remove mortar could remove the paint.

Allow the smears or clumps of mortar to dry, and then use a whisk broom to gently brush off the mortar. In hot or dry weather, moisten the back of each piece with a fine spray of water or a wet brush. If installing over concrete, masonry or a scratch coat, dampen the area before applying the mortar. If corner stones are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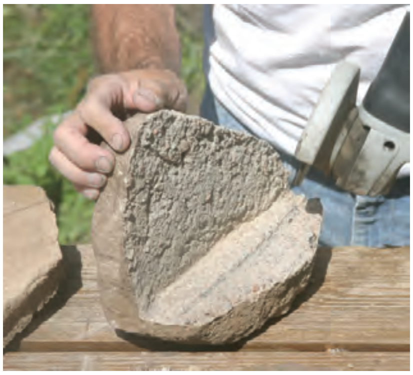
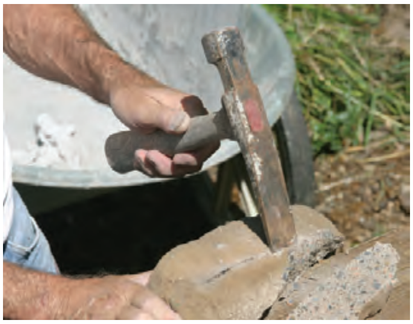


Artificial stone can be cut using several methods. A masonry blade in an angle grinder can be used to cut or score the stone.

An axe, wide-mouth nippers or mason's hammer and/or chisel can also be used to finish the score, or to cut the stone. Wear eye protection and a dust mask.



used, such as on the chimney shown, apply them first. Be sure to alternate the faces of the corner stones with the long and short legs running opposite directions. After the corner stones are applied, work toward the center of the wall with the flat stones.

FINISHING TOUCHES

Allow the mortar to set until you can just create a thumb-print with some pressure. The time will vary according to weather and temperature conditions. Use a jointing tool, or the round head of a bolt, to scrape away sharp edges and round the inside of the joint. Do not remove too much mortar, nor undercut the stones. You may also need to add mortar to the joints, especially if you have applied the stones with mortar on their backs. A mortar bag, similar to a cake-decorating bag, is used to inject mortar into the joints. Once the mortar joints have set sufficiently, use a brush or whisk broom to remove excess mortar. In most cases water should not be used to remove mortar as it can cause staining of the surface. Do not use power washing or wire-brushes for cleaning.

Make sure all water entrance areas are properly flashed.

Mortar joints can be filled with a grout bag. Use a fairly soupy mix.

Force the mortar into the joints.

Different styles of stones also require some additional installation techniques. Styles such as quarried stones require level, plumb and precisely-even joint lines. Long, rectangular pieces look best laid horizontally. River rock styles should not be cut if possible to maintain a natural look. Ledgestone styles should be laid as tightly as possible, and striking joints as deeply as possible, but not exposing the scratch coat or back edges of the stones. Mortar can also be tinted to match the stones to help conceal the joints. In addition to the corner and flat stones, a wide variety of finish stones are available including: window and door trim, keystones, and even receptacle, light and

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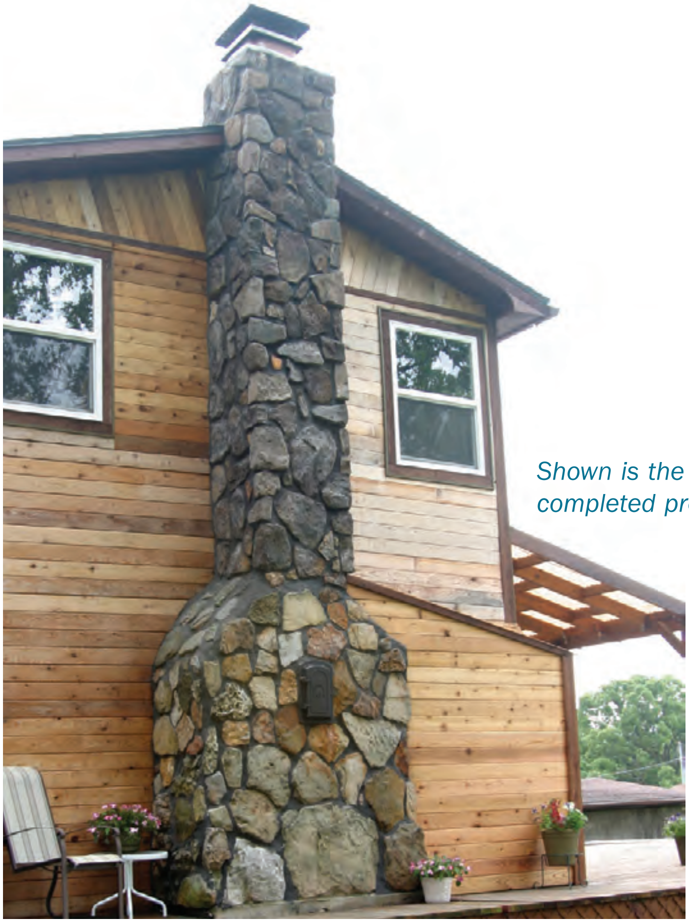
A jointing tool or round-headed bolt can be used to scrape out excess mortar. Then use a whisk broom to clean up loosened mortar and splatters.



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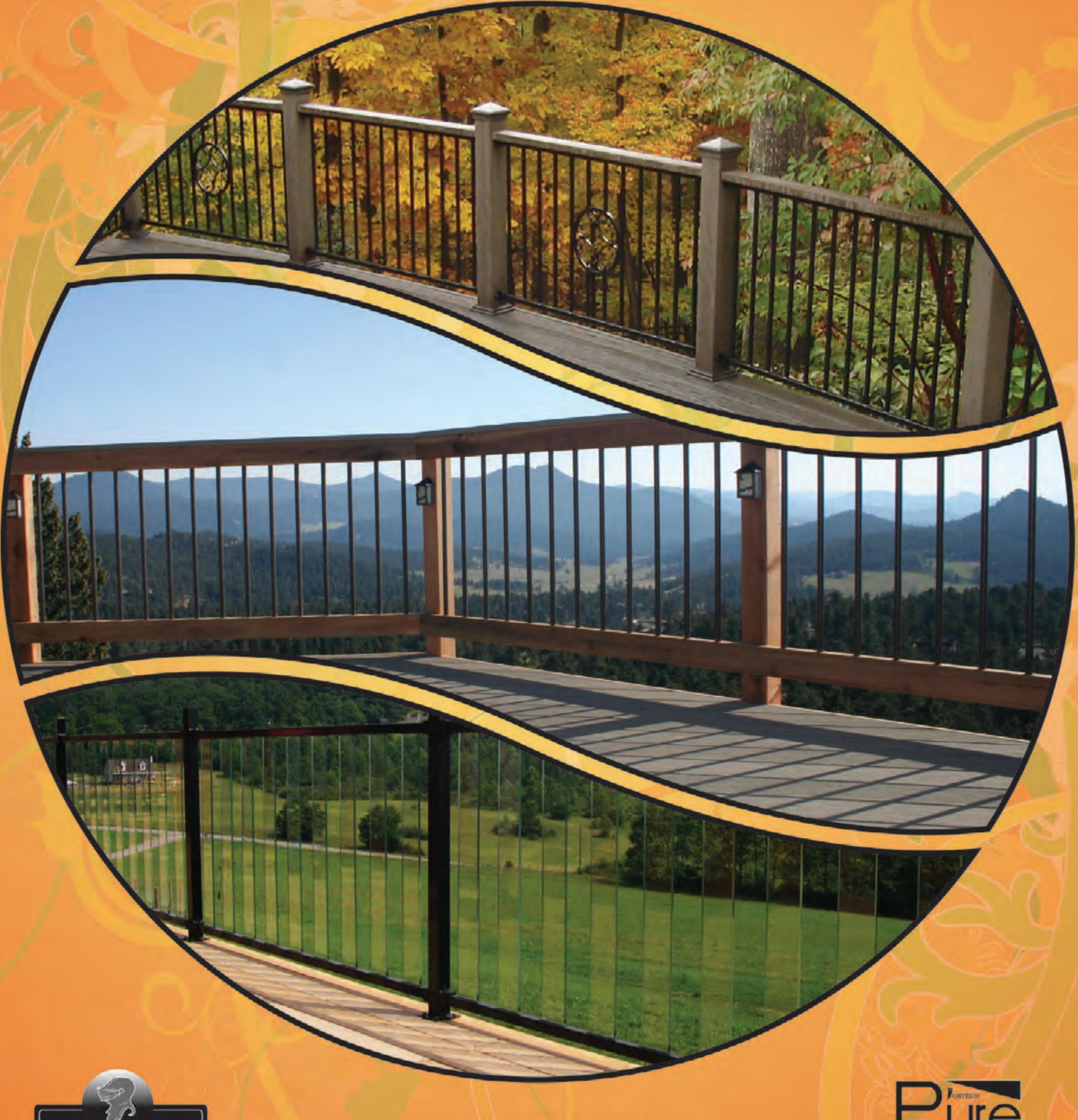

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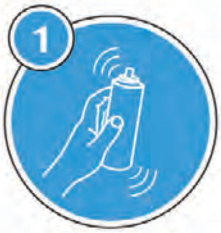
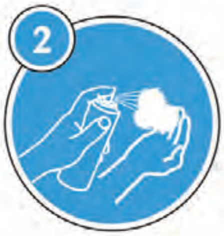
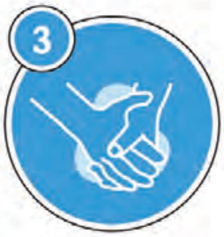


Shake



Spray in hand



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By Larry Walton

TO CHANGE

Exploring Closet Door Types

When Jack and Judy Thomas bought a house for their daughter, they couldn't wait to get rid of the floor-to-ceiling, metal louvered bifold closet doors. "Is there anything you can do about these," they asked.

"Sure, we can take them out, frame in some headers and then you have several different options." After some discussion, we ended up installing single swinging doors for the entry closet and the linen closet.

Another linen closet got a pair of mirrored bifold doors and two of the bedrooms were equipped with mirrored bypass doors. The variety of doors on this project started me thinking about the various door options for closets.

Years of working as a finish carpenter installing thousands of closet doors has definitely influenced my opinion about which doors I think are best. Whether building new or remodeling, the choices you make in closet door types can make a big difference in the looks, traffic flow, functionality and maintenance of your closets.

You may think that the architect had a good reason for choosing the types of doors used for your home's closets. That may be the case, but the chances are pretty good that the doors may have been chosen to cut costs. Bifold and bypass doors with minimum trim can save the builder $100 or more per closet compared to double doors, which may not sound like much until you multiply the amount by the number of doors in the house, and again by the number of houses in the development.

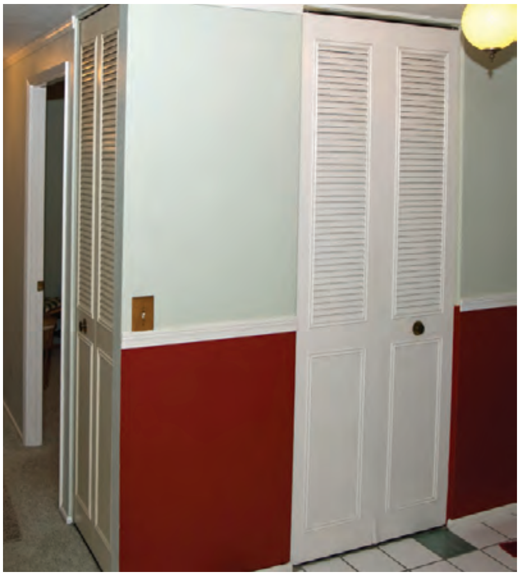
If your home's original closet doors were chosen because of cost rather than for function or beauty, you may have better options. Don't be afraid to consider a change when planning a closet-related home project.

BIFOLD DOORS

Bifolds come in two-panel and four-panel configurations. Each panel is paired to another panel with a set of hinges. The most common bifold door sizes are 4, 5 and 6 feet—each with two pairs of panels. Also used often are half-sets of doors in 2-, 2-1/2- and 3-foot configurations.

Advantages: Bifolds require less room than swinging doors in front of the closet because of how the doors fold as they are opened. The doors are light and tend to be inexpensive. You can also save costs on trim if you really want to cut corners and install the doors without a jamb and casing.

Drawbacks: The folded doors cut back on the size of the useful opening when the doors are open. They tend to be a bit tempermental, so maintenance is an issue. The hardware is specialized and not very durable. Both the floor pivot and



[Hall closet doors before] These metal, louvered closet doors were not the look the new owners had in mind for this hallway area.

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[Hall closet doors after] After adding headers to the door openings, we installed swinging interior doors that matched the existing doors.

track pivot can be knocked out of position easily, which makes the doors out of adjustment. It takes some special techniques and framing to get them set up and working properly.

Tips:

- Leave a little extra room when trimming the door opening for proper operation.
- Determine which trim method you will use. You can go with no jamb, half jamb, full jamb, full jamb with 1-by-1 inset, or full jamb with a half jamb overlapped in casing. The trim design will determine the rough framing opening.

BYPASS

Bypass closet doors are usually two standard door blanks suspended from a track with two rails—one in front of the other. The doors are slightly offset so they can overlap.

Advantages: Bypass doors don't swing out into the room or into the closet. They can be made from almost any door blank so can easily match other interior doors.

Drawbacks: Although not as tempermental as bifolds, the doors can jump off the track, especially when kids leave stuff in the door openings. You can access only half of the

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Double doors can be a good option for up to 6' openings. Door panels, wood types and finishes can be anything you would find on the remaining interior doors in the house. (Photo courtesy of Jeld-Wen)

door opening at a time, which makes items stored in the middle difficult to access.

Tips:

- Obtain the door blanks and the hardware before framing so you can put the pieces together and get the optimal header height. Take into account the flooring.
- Width of the rough opening should be about the same as the "call out." In other words, 48 inches for a 4^{0} opening. The idea is to get a net opening that is 1 to 1-1/2 inches smaller than call out. The jamb or drywall will take away from the opening size and provide the needed overlap.

Although used extensively in tract homes, bifolds can also be constructed of quality hardwoods and trimmed to match the swinging doors in the house. (Photo courtesy of Jeld-Wen)

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MIRRORED BYPASS

Standard mirrored bypass doors are different in many respects to their non-mirrored version. Typically, an aluminum valance and guide combination spans the top of the door opening. A matching metal track is on the floor.

Advantages: They don't swing out into the room or into the closet. They provide some nice, large mirrors for dressing. They also make the room seem larger.

Drawbacks: They are made of glass and are therefore vulnerable to breaking. The wheels travel in a track on the floor and can be derailed by small objects in the grooves or in the way. The whole unit can look a bit out of place because the components don't blend in with the wood on the other doors. The floor track must be placed at a level near the top of the flooring.

Tips:

- Obtain the door blanks and the hardware before framing so you can put the pieces together and get the optimal header height. Take into account the flooring.
- Use a 1/2- to 3/4-inch thick strip of wood to build up the floor under the bottom track in carpet areas.
- For hardwood and other hard surfaces, install the floor track on top of the finished floor surface.

DOUBLE DOORS

Double doors consist of a pair of swinging doors, one with a right-hand swing and the other with a left-hand swing. In closet applications, double doors are usually hung without an astragal between the doors. A ball catch spring-type latch is usually employed so either door can be opened without opening the other.

Advantages: Because the door blanks and jambs are standard interior doors, the trim and hardware can match the other doors in the house. The doors, hinges and hardware are usually durable and stay in adjustment even with frequent use.

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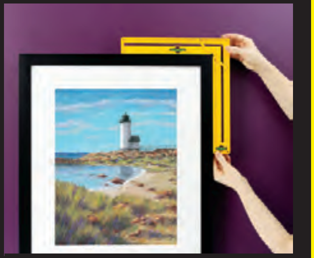
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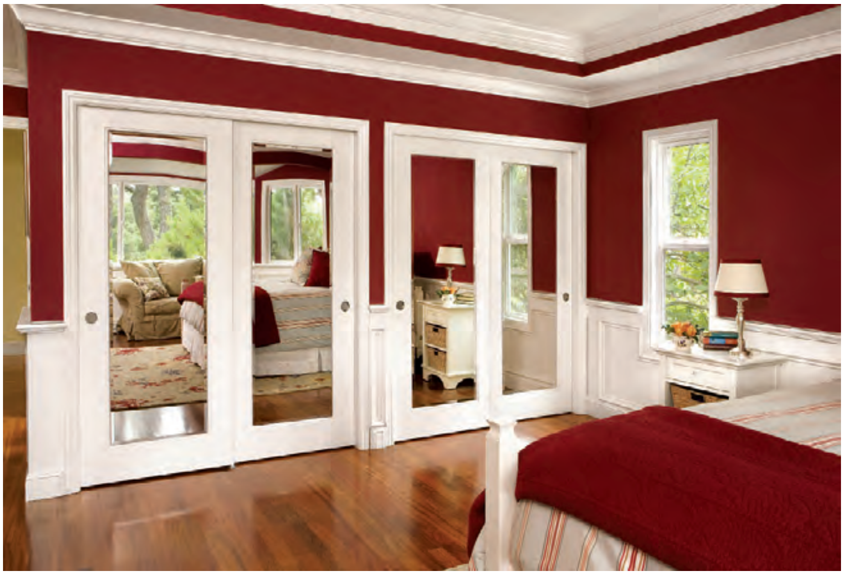
Drawbacks: They swing out into the room, requiring the floor space in front of the doors to be clear of furniture and other stuff.

Tips:

- Frame double closet doors as you would the other interior doors. We frame 6^8 door headers at 82-1/2 inches above the subfloor. Door widths should be 2 inches over the call out if no astragal is being used, but 2-1/2 inches if an astragal is used.

SINGLE SWINGING DOOR

Advantages: Because the door blanks and jambs are standard interior doors, the trim and hardware can match the other doors in the house. The doors, hinges and hardware are usually durable.



Upgraded mirrored bypass doors employ standard rail-and-stile construction with mirrors installed as panels. In this design, casing functions as a valance to cover the metal tracks above the doors. (Photo courtesy of Jeld-Wen)

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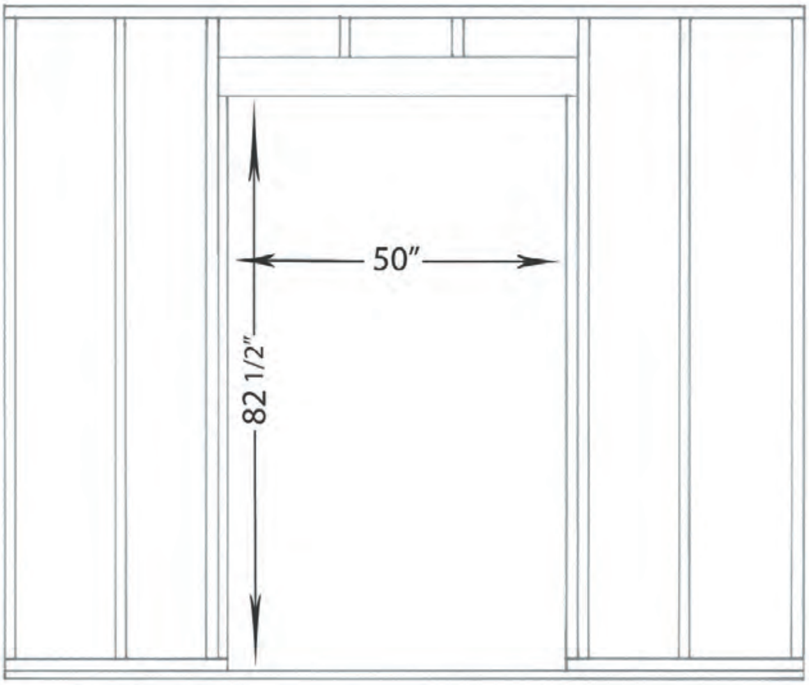

Decide on the style of door before framing the opening. This drawing indicates the framing opening for a set of $4^{0}6^{8}$ double doors. The same doors with an astragal strip need another 1/2" in rough opening width. Bypass doors are framed at 48" wide but may need extra height at the header. Bifold doors should be 49-1/4" if the opening will be wrapped in drywall and 50 inches if a full jamb will be used. We also like to frame our bifold headers at 82" if the opening will be wrapped in drywall, or 82-1/2" works when using a full jamb.

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Drawbacks: They swing out into the room requiring the floor space in front of the doors to be clear of furniture and other stuff.

Tips:

- Often it's best to swing closet doors out of the closet. Plan light switches accordingly.

POCKET DOORS

A pocket door is a sliding door that slides along its length to be concealed, when open, into a compartment in the adjacent wall. They're often used when there is no room for the swing of a hinged door

Advantages: Because a pocket door blank is the same as a swinging door, you can match the door to the other doors in the house. Also, once installed, the casing part of the trim including any parting beads or built-up headers can match the other doors.

Drawbacks: Pocket doors take a bit of skill to install. You need to have double the opening available for a special frame.

Tips:

- Make sure the track is level when installing pocket door frames.
- Be sure that everyone working on the project knows where the pocket doors are to avoid damaging or obstructing the door inside the wall.
- Place an extra vertical support against the door pocket on the inside of the closet before building the closet packs to avoid penetrating the door for shelf and rod supports. EHT

MIRROR, MIRROR

We changed the closet doors on a recent project from floor-to-ceiling bifolds to mirrored bypass doors. (Photos by Tim Walton)

We framed the headers for above the closets as a unit.

We took the mirrored bypass doors out of the box and mocked up the components to see how everything was going to fit together. The instructions in the box often require too much extension of the adjustment mechanism for our likes.

We fastened our header frames with 3" drywall screws.

With the header frames in place, we added drywall.

We used tin snips to cut the drywall corner bead to length.

Installing corner bead is not rocket science, but you do need to take care that it is positioned in a straight line and that it's not rolled or twisted, which can show up in the finished product.

Drywall mud, AKA joint compound, fills the recess between the edges of the corner bead.

We use our carbide-blade miter saws to make straight and smooth cuts on aluminum tracks. Note: This does not work on steel tracks or non-carbide saw blades.

Because the upper track is simply a guide and does not support the doors, the screws just need an inch or so of penetration into the framing.

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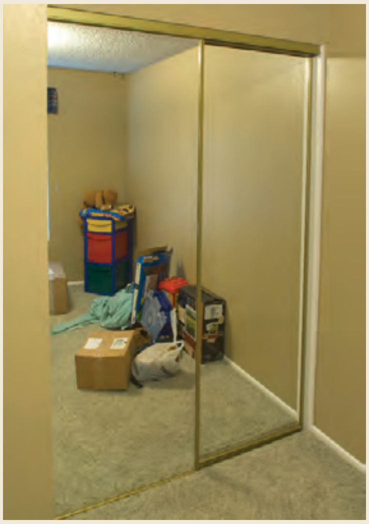
Install the innermost door first. Tip the door out at the bottom, feed it up and into the upper track and then into the guide slots on the floor track.

Adjustment screws on the backs of the doors raise or lower the doors as needed to get the edges matched up with the sides of the door opening.



Shown are the closet mirrored bypass doors installed and adjusted. Note that the overlapped (inner) door is on the right so the outer door can hide the transition when viewed from most of the room.

DECK PRODUCT ROUNDUP

The summertime weather tends to put most people in an outdoor frame of mind. And for most homeowners, the favorite outdoor retreat is the deck. With the latest tools and materials, homeowners have more options than ever when it comes to building and designing a deck. Here's a roundup of some of the latest deck-related products to hit the market.

ECOSHIELD DECK TILES

EcoShield Deck Tiles from AERT make it easy to enhance exterior surfaces and outdoor spaces. The deck tiles are fast and simple to install on patios, verandas, rooftops and virtually any level concrete or gravel surface. The tiles are manufactured using a patented process that encapsulates recycled wood fibers in recycled polyethylene plastic. Similar to composite decking, the unique product makeup resists rot, decay, moisture and insects. As an environmentally friendly product, EcoShield Deck Tiles contain a minimum 30-percent post-consumer recycled content, and 60-percent pre-consumer recycled content. The tiles snap together for simple and secure installation. Combine different patterns and colors to create unique styles for a personal touch. The tiles can also easily unsnap and be repositioned at any time to make new designs. Learn more at www.moistureshield.com.

DECK WRECKER

Mayhew Tools has introduced a lean, mean new tool for demolishing a deck—the Deck Wrecker. With all steel construction, this 44-inch long wrecking bar offers superior leverage with a double pry bar head. By straddling the deck joists between the two prongs and utilizing a

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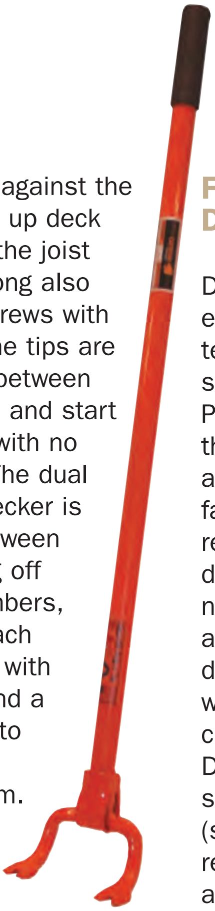
curved rocker design against the joists, it's easy to pry up deck boards while leaving the joist undamaged. Each prong also removes nails and screws with minimal effort, and the tips are narrow enough to fit between installed deck boards and start the decking removal with no other tools needed. The dual head of the Deck Wrecker is also wide enough between prongs to pry decking off doubled framing members, such as rim joists. Each Deck Wrecker comes with a foam handle grip and a powder-coated finish to resist corrosion. Visit www.mayhew.com.



FIBERON HORIZON DECKING

The new Fiberon Horizon Decking products feature the latest patent-pending PermaTech technology that chemically bonds strong HDPE (High-density Polyethylene) and wood fiber with the most resilient surface material available. According to manufacturer Fiber Composites, the result is a low-maintenance outdoor product engineered to set a new standard for stain, scratch and mold resistance. Horizon decking is also easy to clean without the need for special cleaners. Fiberon Horizon Decking is as stylish as it is strong. Four rich designer colors (sand, brick, bronze and slate) require no painting or staining, and reversible boards provide natural woodgrain patterns. An environmentally friendly product, Horizon contains more than 50-percent recycled material and is backed by a 20-year limited warranty. Learn more at www.fiberondecking.com.

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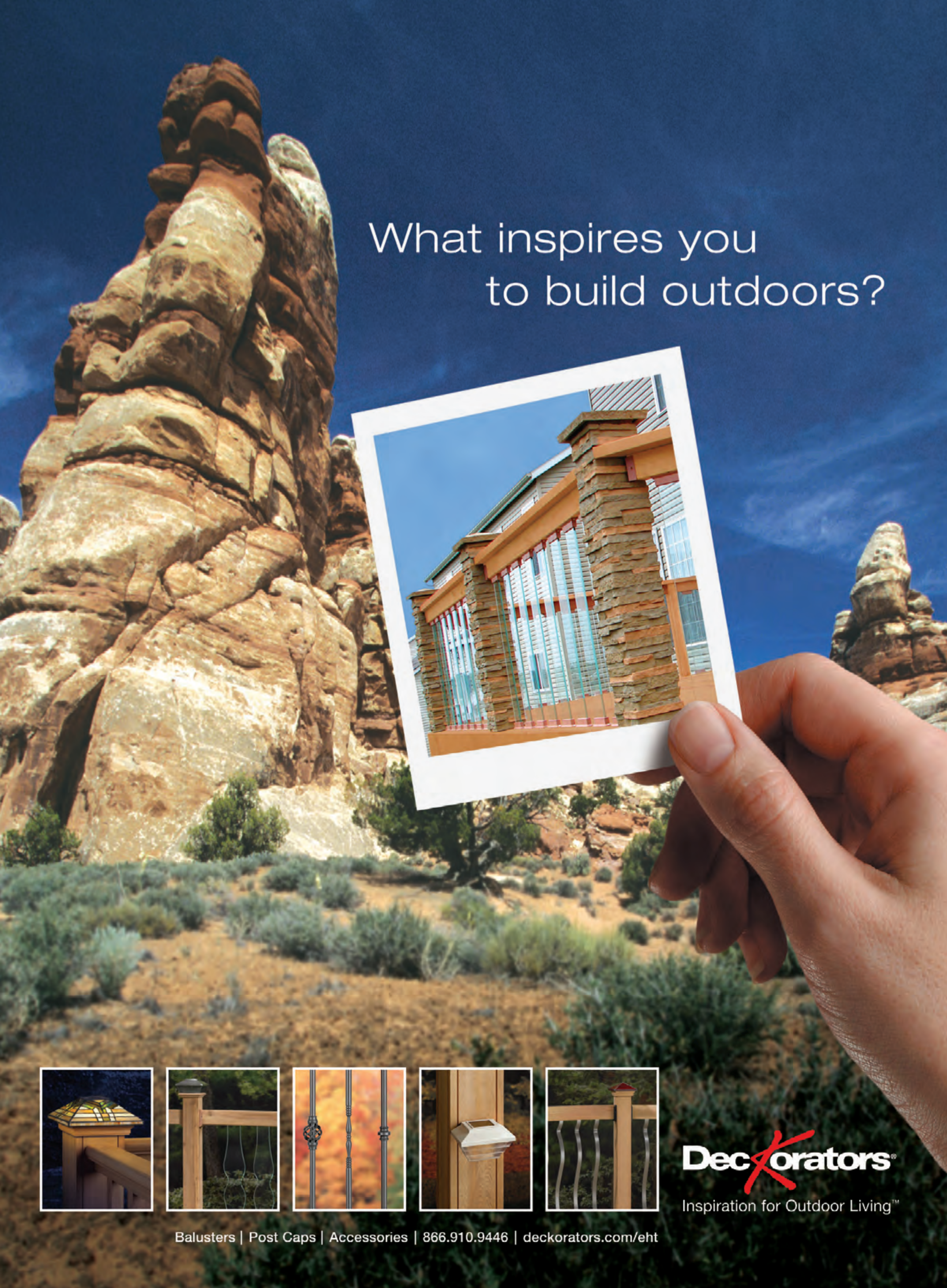

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DECK PRODUCT ROUNDUP

HARDWOOD WRENCH

The Ipe Clip Fastener Company offers a new tool to help straighten bowed decking boards. The Hardwood Wrench is constructed of aircraft aluminum with a handle turned from solid hardwood. With simple one-man operation, it first locks onto the joist, and then the user swings the handle toward the bowed end of the deck board to straighten it in place. Once it's straight, just lock the board in place to hold it in a hands-free position while you install the deck fasteners of your choice. As the Hardwood Wrench cam locks into place it applies much more bending power than other methods of straightening deck boards to bend even the toughest hardwoods, such as ipe, as well as a variety of other materials like composites, treated lumber and cedar. The Hardwood Wrench is also adjustable to accommodate a variety of joist sizes. Learn more at www.hardwoodwrench.com.

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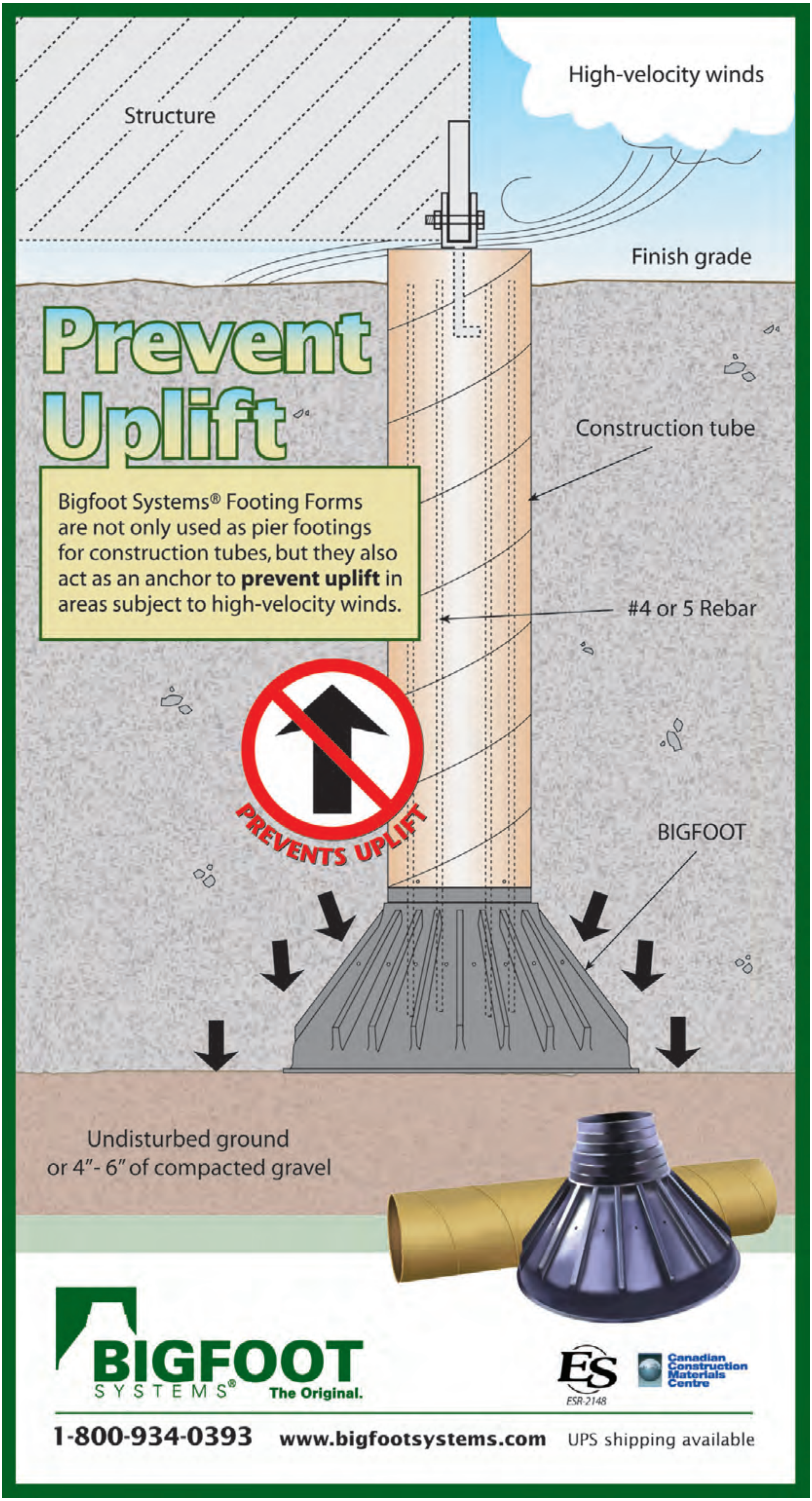
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Tips for Installing Footings

Here are some useful tips to ensure your footings are installed properly and the integrity of your project is maintained:

- You should always make sure that a qualified engineer has designed the footing you are using and that it has been tested by an accredited evaluation firm.
- Select a footing that can carry the weight of your new construction and has met all the proper building codes.
- Ensure you are placing the footing form on solid ground. The more solid the ground the less likely movement will occur.
- Install your footings 4-6 inches below the frost line to avoid potential movement. If you are in an area without frost, the footing form should be placed two feet in the ground and then backfilled to hold it in place when it is being filled with concrete.
- Rebar is an important part of installation. Pour concrete into the footing system first, insert three or four number 4 or 5 rebar rods into the tube. To determine the length of rebar, measure the distance from the top of the tube to the air holes located on the Bigfoot Systems® Footing Form before you place the system in the excavation and backfill.
- Don't risk having to redo the job, do it right the first time!

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DECK PRODUCT ROUNDUP

TIGER CLAW INSTALLATION GUN

Tiger Claw's new semi-automatic installation tool can be used to quickly build a beautiful nail-free surface deck four times faster than traditional surface screwing. The installation gun can be used with Tiger Claw's TC-G hidden deck fasteners for pre-grooved boards. The gun drives a collated pneumatic screw in like a nail, but it can be removed like a screw. Simply slip the hidden deck fastener into the nose of the gun and position it in the groove of the board. The gun automatically enables perfect positioning of fastener and screw installation with the pull of a trigger, giving builders a one-step installation process for hidden deck fasteners. Visit Tiger Claw at www.deckfastener.com.

GENOVATIONS PVC TONGUE-AND-GROOVE DECKING

For a low-maintenance deck with fastener-free appearance, Genovations deck boards, made from solid PVC, utilize a tongue-and-groove system that provides automatic board spacing and completely conceals the screws. Produced in the U.S.A., these durable deck boards come with a lifetime warranty and are designed for quick and easy installation, requiring no expensive spacers or special fasteners. Only common deck screws are needed for installation, driven through a flange along the edge of the decking, which is then

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–**Bob Heidenreich**, Owner The Deck Store, Apple Valley, MN

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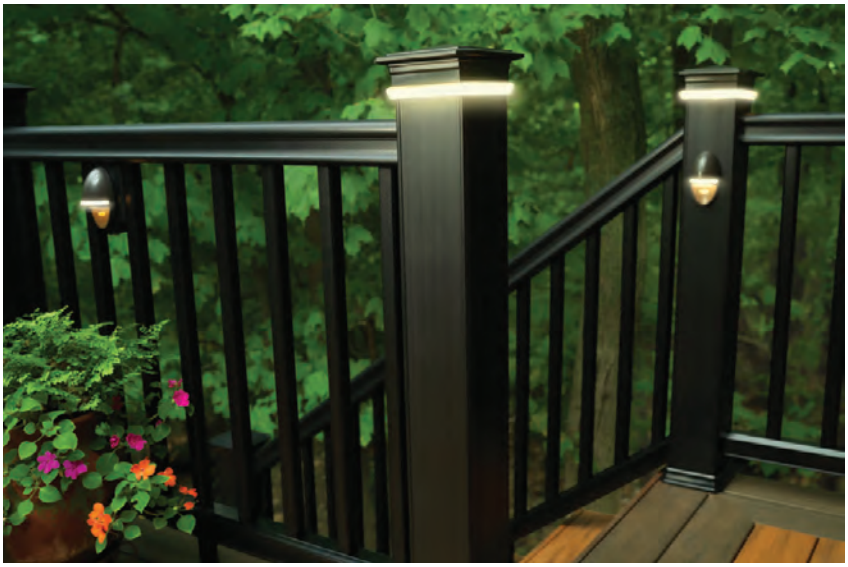
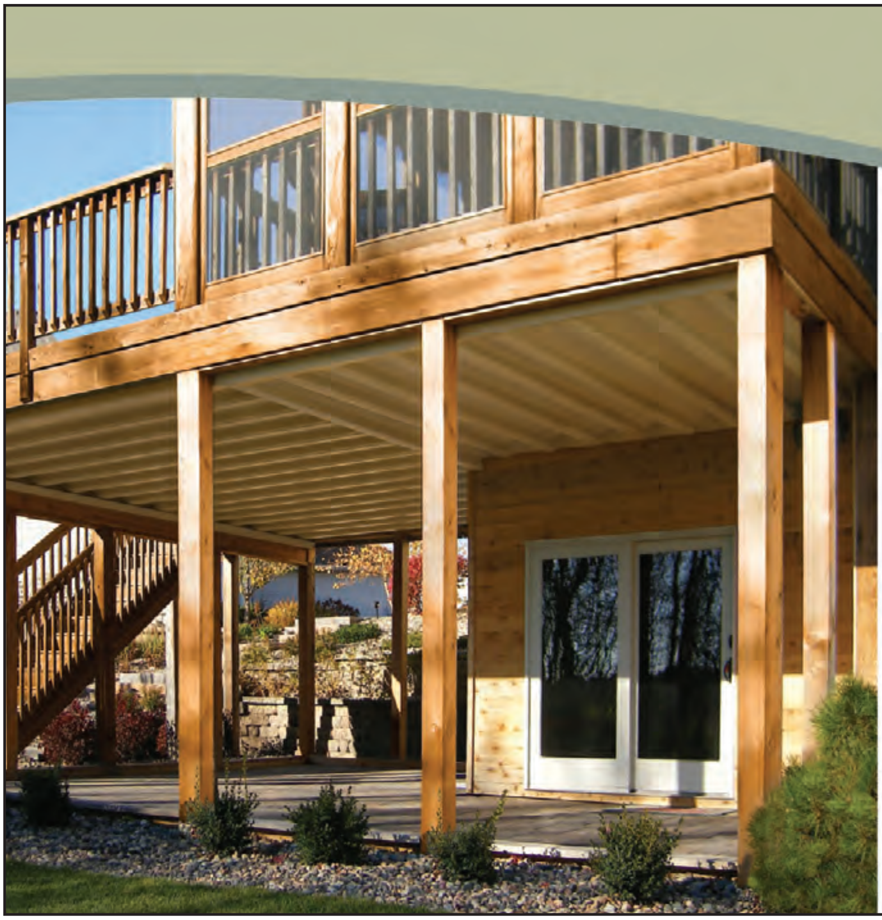
concealed by the placement of the next board in sequence. Genovations deck boards come in two profiles, 2-by-6-inch and the new 5/4-by-6-inch, and are available in four fade-resistant and stain-resistant earth tone shades (sandalwood, birchwood, cedar and driftwood). For more information, visit www.genovaproducts.com.

TIMBERTECH DECKLITES

Featuring post cap lights, baluster-mounted accent lights, post-mounted accent lights, and stair riser lights, the new DeckLites product line from Timbertech is a customizable low-voltage lighting solution to stylishly illuminate the outdoor living space. The post-cap and baluster lights are specifically designed to fit TimberTech's RadianceRail and Ornamental Rail systems. Easy electrical connections let installers run up to 30 lights from a single 300-watt transformer. The new DeckLites are sold individually so homeowners and designers can create a lighting scheme that's ideal for each deck. Visit www.timbertech.com.





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L3 OUTDOOR WOOD

Wolmanized L3 Outdoor Wood is the first pressure-treated wood to be protected with a nonmetallic preservative. So, if you're into the "green" thing, then you'll be happy to hear that this new line of PT lumber is protected by an EPA-registered carbon-based preservative, which is listed in the GreenSpec directory of "environmentally preferable products," and it's even backed by the Good Housekeeping Seal.

However, even if you're a non-recycling, monster truck enthusiast and avid litterbug who burns his old tires in the backyard fire pit (but you occasionally build a deck), then L3 Outdoor Wood offers practical advantages for you, too. Previous types of treated lumber depended on copper or other metals in the preservative treatment. The problem with those metal-based preservatives is that they didn't get along well with other metals, meaning they caused a galvanic reaction that contributed to corrosion of metal hardware. Copper, for example, doesn't mix with aluminum, so when flashing a

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ledger board the installer would previously need to include a barrier between wood and flashing or use copper flashing rather than aluminum to prevent a reaction. With L3, using aluminum flashing is no problem at all. Plus, the previous metal-based preservatives were tougher on woodworking equipment like blades and drill bits, because they were cutting through metal particles in the wood. With no metal content, L3 Outdoor Wood causes less wear to bits and blades. Plus, it has a built-in water repellent and it's easily paintable for use on decks, fence boards, railings, trim, molding and other out-of-ground applications. For more information, visit www.wolmanizedwood.com. **EHT**

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Upgrade Your Garage or Workshop

By editorial staff

A lot of serious DIY'ers have a second home at their home—that being the garage or workshop. What superficially appears to be a cluttered shelter for tools and materials is, to some, a solitary retreat from a noisy household, to others, a mad scientists' laboratory for germinating projects yet to come. Whether a skilled carpenter or a part-time tinkerer, a home-improvement enthusiast's garage or workshop is often considered sacred ground, deserving at least as much attention to design as the kitchen and great room. Here's a look at a few garage amenities to consider when outfitting your home headquarters.

THE WALL AS STORAGE SPACE

A couple of nails in the wall serving as storage hooks are par for the course in virtually any garage or workshop. A few dozen nails is another story, and while no one will be giving your workspace the "white glove test," some degree of organization will pay off not only in garage décor, but also when searching for that lone, misplaced tool.

The traditional upgrade from the scattered-nail approach has been pegboards made from pressboard panels, but the material has a tendency to warp, swell, crack or fray when it absorbs moisture. In response, Wall Control, has developed an all-steel pegboard panel that utilizes a secure hook and shelving system. The strength of steel combined with a formed flange around the perimeter make Wall Control's metal pegboard panels more than 10 times stronger than conventional pegboard. More strength equals more storage. The durable steel panels are available in a variety of powder-coated colors, along with a variety of hooks, brackets, shelves and accessories (www.wallcontrol.com).

TOOL CHESTS TO BUILD ON

Storage and organization are key to an efficient workspace. When choosing a tool storage system, consider your size and mobility requirements. Although an enormous 72-inch tool chest might be the envy of your neighbors, a fully stocked tool box can weigh well over a thousand pounds and encroach on a great deal of precious space. Is your

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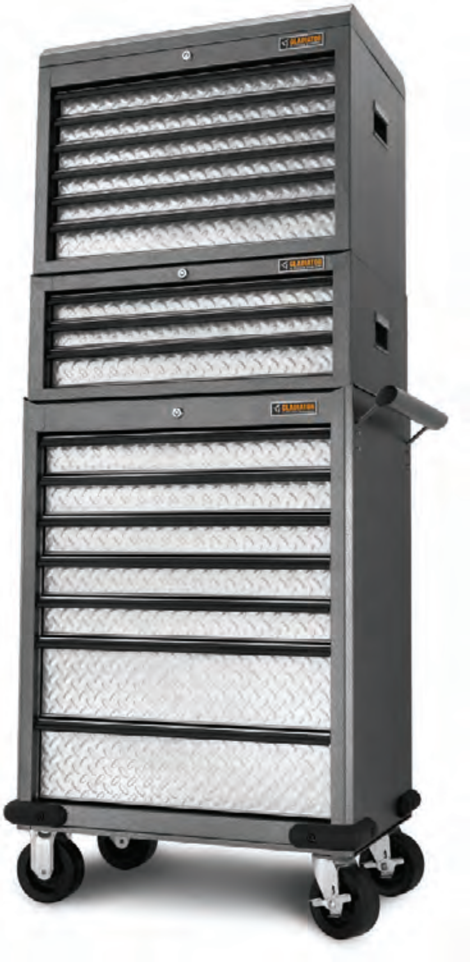
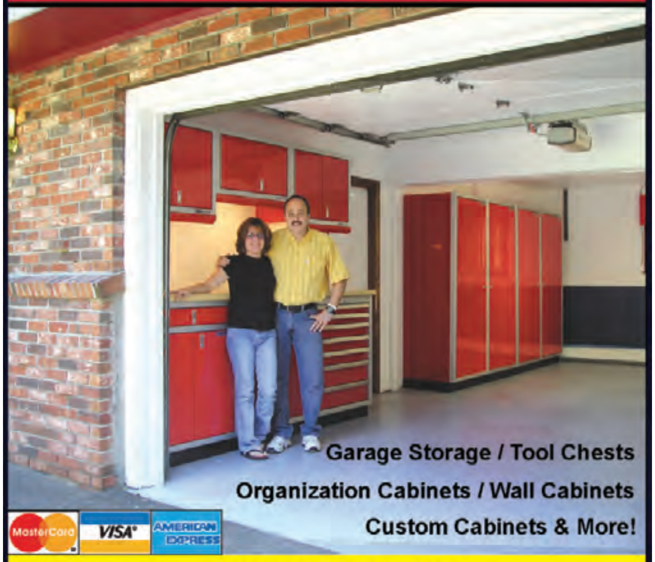
work space at a premium? If so, bigger may not be better. Will the tool chest be mobile or stationary? Because the larger the chest, the more difficult it is to move, casters or not.

Gladiator GarageWorks now offers a line of stackable tool storage chests, each sold separately so you can add to the system as your storage requirements expand. The Premier series of stackable chests includes the 7-Drawer Roll-Away, a 3-Drawer Intermediate Chest, and a 6-Drawer Tool Chest. Each tool chest features heavy-duty, welded steel construction, sleek recessed handles, steel ball-bearing slides, cushioned drawers and a combined weight capacity of 1,000 pounds. The 7-Drawer Roll-Away makes a strong, mobile base with its rugged, reversible casters and reversible side-push handle. To expand the system, stack on the 3-Drawer Intermediate Chest, which is compact, modular and ideal for frequently used items. Then top it off with the 6-Drawer Tool Chest, which has ample room for large and small hand tools that are easily misplaced, plus it has a divided top till for even smaller items.

Available in Classic and Premier stylings, both versions will be sold as three-piece stackable units available for purchase separately. Additionally, Gladiator will soon introduce Wide Tool Chests for more tool storage options, which will be available in a 41-inch two-piece stack or a 52-inch two-piece stack (www.gladiatorgw.com).





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OVERHEAD STORAGE RACKS

Simply put, overhead storage racks make the most economical use of your living area by utilizing space that would otherwise go unused. Easily installed by a DIY'er, some quality overhead storage racks can hold up to 600 pounds and be customized to fit any garage.

One popular system, called SafeRacks, is solidly constructed of 14-gauge industrial steel horizontal supports with a c-channel design with wire mesh decking on top. To maximize the amount of weight that can be held when attached to the ceiling of your garage, each vertical support in the SafeRacks system is attached to at least two ceiling supports. The dual connection design helps to displace the amount of weight bearing on any single joist for additional strength. SafeRacks is available in sizes ranging from 2-by-2 feet to 8-by-4 feet. The system comes with powder-coated finish and limited lifetime warranty (www.saferacks.com).

Another overhead storage system comes from Hyloft, which offers both ceiling and wall storage units available in various colors, sizes and finishes. Hyloft's flagship 45-by-45-inch ceiling storage unit is made of strong, durable steel and adjusts in

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height from 16 to 28 inches. It offers storage space of more than 30 cubic feet and holds up to 250 pounds. Each unit is easy to install and includes all necessary hardware to attach to finished or unfinished ceilings, and multiple units easily connect to maximize storage capacity. Hyloft also offers a 36-by-36 version of the overhead unit, as well as two wall storage units and a variety of accessories, including racks, baskets and hooks (www.hyloft.com).

KEEPING IT CLEAN

From dirt tracked inside from the garden to sawdust from cutting wood stock, garages and workshops attract dirt and debris like two-sided tape. For the messiest spills, shop vacuums can suck up liquid or dry material. Also, shop vacuums are generally more powerful, and can suck up larger diameter items than a normal vacuum can. A vacuum system for garage and shop cleanup is crucial, but you don't have to buy the largest, most expensive system to get your money's worth. Vacs come in 1 gallon to 55 gallon sizes, but most DIY'ers can get away with a compact 6-gallon, 3-horsepower version to keep size down and storage requirements to a minimum. Professional contractors may require a more powerful vacuum motor and larger tank capacity.

Serious woodworkers may opt for a more sophisticated dust-extraction vacuum system that attaches a hose to power tools to vacuum dust right where it is produced.

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One new vacuum option for the DIY'er is the Vacmaster Wall Mount unit. One of the most outstanding features of the Wall Mount Vac is a remote control on/off switch that gives you control of the vac at your finger tips, saving time and footsteps when using it for cleanup. Ideal for use in the garage, shop or basement, the vac also easily detaches from the wall for portable use. Equipped with a powerful 5-peak horsepower Dual Turbo Industrial motor, it provides excellent suction and quiet operation. With 21 feet of hose and a 20-foot power cord, the Vacmaster Wall Mount Vac can access messes anywhere inside and outside the home. Plus, it converts into a powerful blower, perfect for clearing debris from the garage, patio or driveway (www.vacmaster.com).

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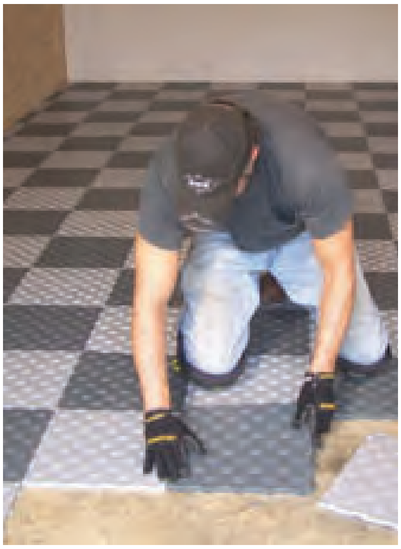
SNAP-TOGETHER FLOOR TILE

To add some much needed décor to a lifeless concrete slab floor, snap-together tile systems are available in a wide array of colors and styles. To install the garage floor, just snap a few square layout lines on the floor to guide the installation and then simply place the tiles side by side, interlocking the pegs under one tile with the loops on the edge of the other. Installation couldn't be much simpler, and by mixing and matching colors the installer can invent customized decorative patterns. A quality snap-together floor system creates an attractive, non-slip, solid surface that is durable and easy to clean.



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The *EHT* staff covered the floor of our workshop with SwissTrax brand flooring with a diamond-tread pattern, called DiamondTrax. We installed a checkerboard pattern with alternating colors of light gray and slate gray. The DiamondTrax flooring refuses to chip break no matter how many tools or heavy materials we drop on it, and it provides a softer, more back-friendly floor than hard slab concrete.

The SwissTrax company offers a variety of garage tiles available in up to 14 colors. The company's most popular seller is Ribtrax, which has an open profile that allows water to drain through the tiles, keeping walkways dry and safe (www.swisstrax.com).

Another popular modular flooring company, Snap Lock Industries, manufactures several lines of purpose-built flooring, including RaceDeck garage floor tile, made in the USA of a high-impact copolymer. RaceDeck is engineered to handle extreme vehicle rolling load capacities and resist oil, grease, petroleum products, antifreeze and most household chemicals. Snap Lock also manufactures SnapSports Courts & Surfaces, DuraGrid Matting & Decking, and SnapLock Portable Dance & Event Flooring.

For the toughest, commercial-grade garage applications, Snap Lock offers the new REVolution garage flooring. "The REVolution system is without a doubt the tough-est full-suspension modular flooring system in the industry," says Jorgen Moller, CEO of SnapLock Industries. REVolution has multiple patents and patent pending features, from the innovative PowerLock interlocking system to the SuperStructure that supports massive rolling loads. To learn more, visit www.racedeck.com. **EHT**

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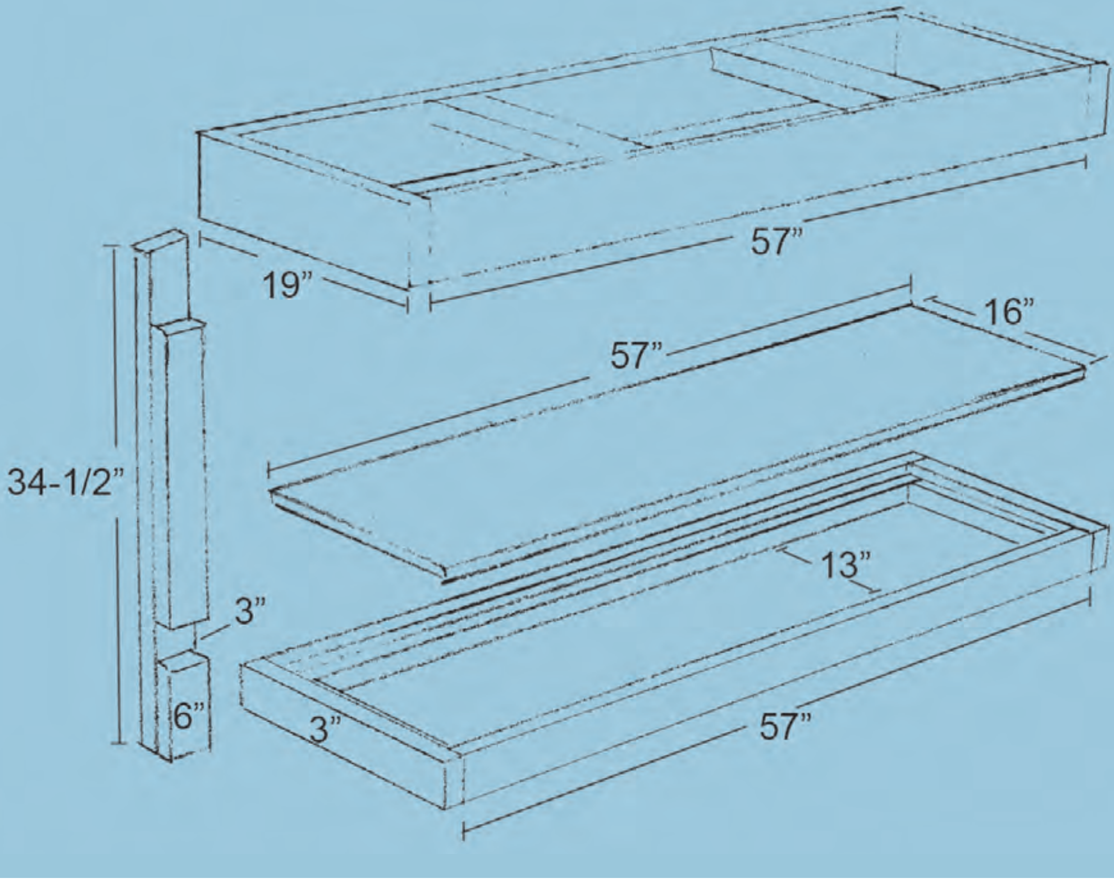
EASY-TO-BUILD WORKBENCH

Here's a simple weekend project: My workshop needed a sturdy, flat work surface that I could access from all sides without a wall in my way, so I built the rock-solid workbench pictured here. This beefy bench is constructed from 2-by-6's, 2-by-4's and 2-by-2's. I first ripped the rounded edges off the lumber, so each 2-by-4 measured 3 inches, and each 2-by-6 measured 5 inches. Then I assembled the bench according to the diagram shown, sizing the height for a 6-foot tall person to work comfortably, but you can adjust the height of your bench accordingly. I used 2-1/2-inch No. 8 wood screws when nailing through 2-by lumber into the face of another 2-by board. However, I used 3-inch screws when nailing through 2-by lumber and into the edge of a board.

You have the option of making the legs from 4-by-4 lumber and notching them as necessary. However, I made them from 2-by-4's, spacing the blocks to accept the table top and lower shelf. The bottom shelf is supported by 2-by-2's attached to the inside of the lower box frame. Make the bottom shelf by cutting your sheet material of choice to fit flush into the lower frame, and fasten to the 2-by-2's with 1-5/8-inch wood screws.

The sturdy top is nothing more than a solid-core door from Lowe's (www.lowes.com), centered on the table frame and screwed to the 2-by-4 brackets from beneath. You can also construct the table from doubled sheets of plywood or even build a butcher-block top—you've got plenty of options to customize this table in any way that better suits you.



HOT PRODUCTS

GLIDE SLIP-ON WORK SHOE FROM WOLVERINE

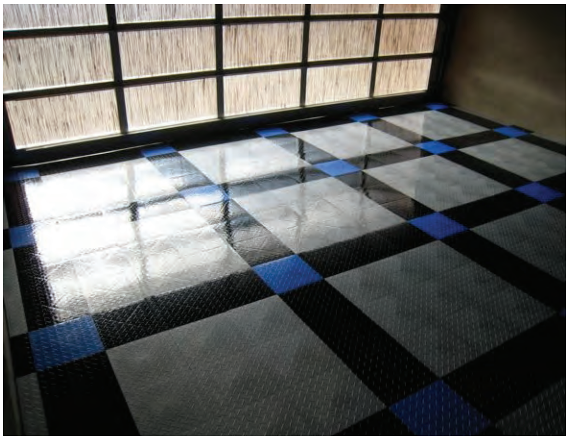
Wolverine adds a slip-on shoe to its arsenal this year that transitions from work to play with ease. Youthful design and superior protection combine to create the Glide, the next generation of work footwear that looks as good as it performs. The skater sneaker-inspired work shoe features Wolverine Performance leather and suede upper and a removable full-cushion footbed. The Glide is available in a black slip-on, with twin-gore construction for easy on and off and a slip-resistant rubber outsole. Visit www.wolverine.com.

MAKITA 18V 3-SPEED IMPACT DRIVER

Makita offers the new 18V LXT Lithium-Ion Cordless 3-Speed Brushless Motor Impact Driver, model BTD144. This powerful and versatile impact driver has a variable 3-speed power selection switch, providing the user with precise fastening control for a wide range of applications, from fastening cabinet screws to driving lag bolts. The 3-speed ID offers soft, medium and hard impact power to cover a wide range of fastening tasks. The soft impact setting, 0-1,300 RPM and 0-1,300 IPM, is intended for small fasteners such as hinge screws for woodworking. The medium impact setting, 0-2,000 RPM and 0-2,800 IPM, is set for medium sized fasteners such as drywall screws. The hard impact setting, 0-2,600 RPM and 0-3,400 IPM, delivers up to 1,420 inch/pounds of maximum torque for large fasteners such as lag bolts. Visit www.makitatools.com.

SNAP LOCK GARAGE FLOORING

Snap Lock Industries manufacturers several lines of purpose-built flooring, including RaceDeck garage floor tile, made in the USA of a high-impact copolymer. RaceDeck is engineered to handle extreme vehicle rolling load capacities and resist oil, grease, petroleum products, antifreeze and most household chemicals. For the toughest, commercial-grade garage applications, Snap Lock offers the new REVolution garage flooring. “The REVolution system is without a doubt the toughest full-suspension modular flooring system in the industry,” says Jorgen Moller, CEO of SnapLock Industries. REVolution has multiple patents and patent pending features, from the innovative PowerLock interlocking system to the SuperStructure support that carries the weight of massive rolling loads. Snap Lock also manufactures SnapSports Courts & Surfaces, DuraGrid Matting & Decking, and SnapLock Portable Dance & Event Flooring. Visit www.racedeck.com.



INNOVATIVE FEATURES FOR TRIPOD LADDERS

Stokes Ladders, Inc., offers new, innovative features to its line of aluminum tripod ladders. These orchard-style ladders, which have long been used in the fruit tree industry, have been gaining popularity with professional arborists as well as homeowners for use around ornamental and fruit trees and general use on uneven terrain because of their inherent stability. Made of high-strength structural aluminum, standard features include a wide base for stability, comfortable 3-inch deep, non-skid steps and a shoulder pad at the balance point for easy carrying. A solid red warning step reminds users of safe climbing levels. Optional features include slip-resistant, non-marking feet for safety on patios, walks and driveways, a galvanized steel cable to keep the third leg from sliding out too far (detachable for use over tree limbs), and a telescoping third leg to allow the ladder to be used on steeper slopes and terraced gardens. Visit www.stokesladders.com.

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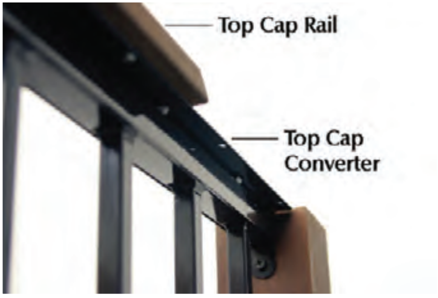

Fortress Iron's Top Cap Converter seamlessly integrates wood, composite or PVC cap rails with Fortress Classic Railing panels. The flat design of the Top Cap Converter allows for easy installation of a 1- or 2-inch cap rail using provided screws. With its unique U-channel design, the combination can then be mounted to the railing panel using epoxy. The Top Cap Converter is manufactured using pre-galvanized steel, treated with a zinc phosphate coating, and then treated with a premium powder-coat finish. This process creates a resistance to the effects of weathering and minimizes the risk of rust. The Top Cap Converter assists in creating a polished look and provides an effortless way to attach a cap rail. Visit www.fortressiron.com.

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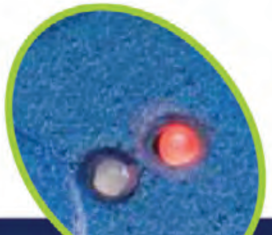

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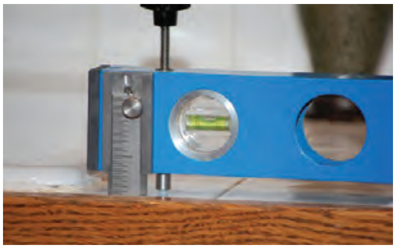
HOT PRODUCTS

PLUMB PERFECT LEVEL

The Plumb Perfect Level extends and retracts with removable parts making this an excellent multipurpose level, offering several sizes in one tool. The Plumb Perfect Level is 52 inches when closed, and 96 inches when fully extended. It can be taken apart and configured as a standard 2- or 4-foot level, eliminating the need to carry different levels to the jobsite. The tool includes a measuring device that provides an exact out-of-plumb reading within 1/32 of an inch, which prevents the need to check with a tape measure. Plus, using a thumb-screw stabilizer, the level can be pushed away from the work surface until it reads plumb or level, then the user simply slides over the measuring device for an accurate reading of the “out” condition. You can then either cut the material you’re installing out of square or add spacers the size of the out condition, reducing time spent installing material, shimming and checking level.



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